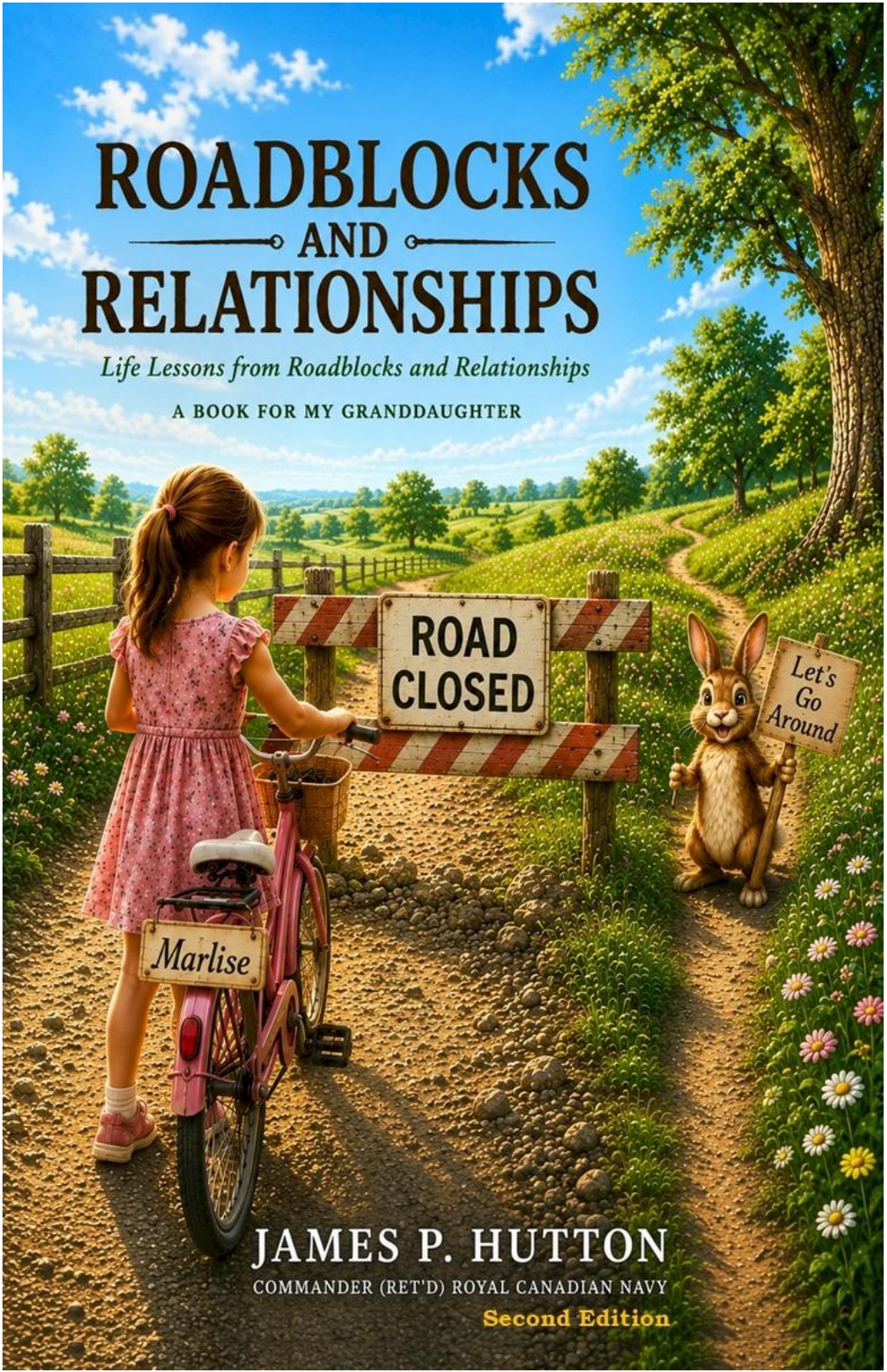
ROADBLOCKS
AND
RELATIONSHIPS
Life Lessons from Roadblocks and Relationships
A BOOK FOR MY GRANDDAUGHTER
ROAD
CLOSED
Let's
Go
Around
Marlise
JAMES P. HUTTON
COMMANDER (RET'D) ROYAL CANADIAN NAVY
Second Edition

ROADBLOCKS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Lessons Learned from a Lifetime of Navigating Roadblocks and Building Relationships

by

James Patrick Hutton
Commander (Ret'd) CD, rmc, MSc MBA

Published by

Old Fidelity Publishing

Owen Sound, Ontario



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Roadblocks and Relationships

Lessons from a Lifetime of Overcoming Obstacles

by James Patrick Hutton

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This book was written as a personal memoir for my granddaughter, Marlise, in the hope that the lessons learned throughout my life may encourage her to face life's roadblocks with courage, curiosity, kindness, and perseverance.

Unless otherwise indicated, all photographs are from the personal collection of the author.

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Preserving Stories Worth Keeping

Second Edition
Printed in Canada

"Life never asked whether I wanted another roadblock. It simply put one in front of me. My success came not from avoiding obstacles, but from refusing to let them decide where my journey would end."

James Patrick Hutton

Dedication

I dedicate this book to my granddaughter, Marlise.

I've been thinking about the world you would inherit. I know that, like every generation before you, your life will be filled with excitement, opportunity, disappointment, and challenges that neither of us can yet imagine.

I wish I could always be there to help you through those difficult times. But I also know that one day you'll have to face many of life's roadblocks on your own. That is why I wrote this book.

These pages are not simply the story of my career. They are the story of the lessons that life taught me over nearly eight decades—lessons that were learned through failure as often as success, through disappointment as often as achievement, and through perseverance far more often than talent.

These pages are not simply the story of my career. They are the story of the lessons that life taught me over nearly eight decades—lessons that were learned through failure as often as success, through disappointment as often as achievement, and through perseverance far more often than talent.

Always remember that Life is not a journey you make alone.

The people you meet, the friendships you build, the respect you show others, and the reputation you earn will often open doors that ability alone never can. Treat everyone with kindness and respect, even those with whom you disagree or may not particularly like. You never know who will one day become a friend, a mentor, a customer, a colleague, or the person who changes the direction of your life.

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Introduction

I wrote this book for my granddaughter and for every other young person striving to succeed in a demanding world. Life will not always follow the path you expect. Some days everything moves forward smoothly; other days you'll face roadblocks that make you question your direction. Those moments aren't failures—they're part of the journey.

Although this book tells the story of my career, its real purpose is to share the lessons life taught me along the way. When I was young, I believed the biggest obstacle in front of me would define my future. I later learned that every obstacle has a solution if you don't give up. Some people stop at roadblocks; others find a way around, over, or under them. Those are the people who achieve what once seemed impossible.

The second lesson took longer to understand:

Success is Never Achieved Alone.

Every step of my career was shaped by people who encouraged me, challenged me, or opened doors I didn't know existed. Those opportunities came because I invested in relationships, earned trust, and treated everyone with respect—even those I didn't always agree with. Kindness and integrity travel farther than any résumé.

As you read these stories, don't focus on the titles I held. Look instead for the lessons behind each chapter—lessons born from setbacks, successes, and unexpected opportunities. If these pages accomplish anything, I hope they give you the confidence to face challenges with determination, the courage to keep moving when others stop, and the wisdom to value people as much as accomplishments.

In the end, success is measured not only by what you achieve . . .but by who you become.

Perseverance and relationships shaped my life.

My hope is that they will help shape yours.

Chapter One: Never Accept the Word Impossible

ROADBLOCKS APPEAR AT ALL STAGES OF LIFE

"The word 'impossible' has never stopped me. It has simply challenged me to find another way – or ask a different question." — *James Patrick Hutton*

Growing Up with Very Little

Every life begins somewhere. Some begin with opportunity. Others begin with obstacles. Mine began with very little money, uncertain circumstances, and more roadblocks than I could count. Looking back, I now realize those early hardships were not disadvantages at all—they were my first teachers.

I rose through the Navy ranks from Ordinary Seaman to Commander. Then, in my civilian career started over again at the bottom and rose to become the Vice President of Finance and Administration for a College. Seeing this, people sometimes look at my career and assume that I must have always known where I was going.



Nothing could be further from the truth.

I never planned to become a naval officer. I never imagined earning three university degrees. I certainly never expected to become an engineer, a commander in the Canadian Navy, a university executive, or a vice-president of a college.

If someone had predicted those things when I was a young boy, I would have laughed.

Because the truth is, I didn't begin life with advantages. I began life with roadblocks.

I was born into a hardworking family in a small Ontario town where money was always scarce. My parents worked hard, but there never seemed to be quite enough to make ends meet. Some

years my father had steady work. Other years he didn't, and our family felt the uncertainty that so many families still experience today.

Every August my mother somehow managed to buy me one new shirt and one new pair of pants for the coming school year. Those were the only new clothes I received all year.

As a boy, I didn't think very much about what we lacked. I simply assumed that everyone lived much the same way we did. Looking back, however, I realize those early years gave me a gift that many people never receive.

Resourcefulness and Perseverance.

When you don't have much, you learn to make the most of what you do have. You learn to solve problems instead of complaining about them. You learn that waiting for someone else to improve your circumstances is rarely a successful strategy.

Those lessons would shape the rest of my life. I also learned something else at a very young age. That is …

Life is rarely fair.

Some people begin with every advantage. Others begin with very few. We don't get to choose the circumstances into which we're born. We only get to choose what we do with them.

That choice would become one of the defining principles of my life. Again and again, I would encounter situations that appeared impossible. Sometimes the obstacle was financial. Sometimes it was academic. Sometimes it was professional. Later in life, it would even be medical.

Each time I faced the same decision. I could accept the roadblock as the end of the journey.

Or I could find another way.

Grandpa's Signpost

When you can't change your circumstances, change your approach

Looking back over the past seventy-seven years, I now realize that every significant opportunity in my life began with what first appeared to be an impossible obstacle. This book is the story of those obstacles.

But more importantly, it is the story of the paths I discovered around them.

If there is one lesson, I hope you carry with you as you read these pages, it is this:

Never let a roadblock become your destination.

There is almost always another way forward. Sometimes you simply have to keep looking until you find it.



You are Smarter Than You Think
You can Achieve More than You Believe

Never be Afraid to Take on New Challenges

A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

As you grow older, there will be times when life doesn't seem fair. Some people will begin with advantages you don't have, while others will appear to reach their goals more easily.

Don't measure your journey against theirs.

I began life with very little, but looking back, I wouldn't change those early years. They taught me to appreciate what I had, work for what I wanted, and find another way when something stood between me and where I hoped to go.

When you face difficult circumstances of your own, don't spend too much time asking why they happened. Instead, ask yourself:

"What's the best thing I can do with what I've been given?"

That question has guided me through many of life's roadblocks. I hope someday it will guide you too.

Remember, Marlise, where you begin is only the first page of your story.

You get to write the chapters that follow.



With Love

Grandpa

Chapter Two: My Earliest Roadblocks

FIND ANOTHER WAY

"The first solution may not always work. Sometimes you have to change your approach, listen to someone else, and simply find another way.

— James Patrick Hutton

A Roadblock at a very Young Age

Like most children growing up in the 1950s, I spent much of my free time outdoors. There was no real television in our home. The single channel from the antenna on our roof just didn't cut it. As well in those days there were no electronic devices to keep us inside. My world was the neighbourhood, the St Mary's schoolyard, and the open field behind my friend Rob's house.

Rob lived just up the street, and we spent countless hours together playing baseball. We played in the field behind his house, at school during recess, and again during our lunch hour. If there was enough time and something that resembled a ball and a bat, we could usually find a way to start a game.

Then, in the fall of 1957, everything changed.

After spending what seemed like an eternity at Toronto's Hospital for Sick Children, I was diagnosed with Legg–Calvé–Perthes disease, a condition affecting the rounded top of the thigh bone where it meets the hip. Reduced blood flow to the area can damage the developing bone and, in my case, it required a treatment that dramatically changed the life of an active young boy.

I was fitted with a large metal brace that extended from beneath my arms to about five inches below my left foot. Because the brace kept my left leg suspended off the ground, I wore a special platform shoe on my right foot to compensate for the difference in height.



Owen Sound's 1958 "Timmy"

HELP
CRIPPLED CHILDREN
Easter Seal For Crippled Children

The bright little lad, sitting beside Rotarian Donald Fleming, Chairman of the Owen Sound Rotary Club's 1958 Easter Seal Campaign is eight-year-old Jimmy Hutton, son of Mr. and Mrs. J.J. Hutton 850 15th Street East.

The brace on his left leg, extending almost to his shoulders, is there in an effort to bring about a cure for Legg-Perthes disease, with which Jimmy was stricken several months ago.

At that time Jimmy spent about three weeks at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto, where the disease, believed caused by the cutting off of the blood supply, and the resultant softening of the bone in the hip joint, was diagnosed as Legg-Perthes disease.

Jimmy will have to wear his brace for at least three years, but it is hoped that eventually he will be a le to walk again like normal youngster, without the brace.

In the meantime, the Owen Sound Rotary Club is doing all it can to help him. Just as other service clubs are in Ontario Society for Crippled Children are help "Timmies" all over the province, with funds raised through the sale of Easter Seals

The 1958 Easter Seal campaign opens today, Thursday, March 6th. Your dollars will go along way toward helping "Jimmy" and many other crippled Children to be well again. Buy and Use Easter Seals. – Sun Times Staff Photo.

Suddenly, many of the things I had taken for granted became difficult.

I could no longer run normally. I couldn't bend my left leg. Even walking required learning an entirely new way of moving.

But the biggest problem, at least in the mind of an eight-year-old boy, was much more serious:

"How was I going to play baseball?"

Find Another Way

Like most right-handed batters, I stood at the plate with the bat over my right shoulder. But with my left leg locked straight in the brace, I couldn't bend into a normal batting stance or shift my weight properly when I swung.

That didn't stop me from trying.

I remember standing at the plate one lunchtime and swinging wildly at the first pitch.

I missed.

Then I heard Rob yell:

"Try the other way!"

So I did.

I moved to the other side of the plate and put the bat over my left shoulder. Now my right leg—the one I could bend—was forward.

Grandpa's Signpost

If you can't do something one way, try doing it another

The next pitch came. I swung.

This time, I connected solidly and sent the ball into left field.

Then I ran—or at least performed the unusual version of running I had developed with one leg locked rigidly in a metal brace.

I made it to first base. It may not have looked like much to anyone watching, but to me, it was a victory.

I had encountered one of the first roadblocks I can remember, and the solution was remarkably simple – try another way!

I also learned something else that would become increasingly important throughout my life.

Sometimes the person who helps you find another way is someone standing right beside you.

My friendship with Rob had helped me overcome my first roadblock. It wouldn't be the last.

Another Roadblock

A few months later, I encountered another problem—again on the baseball field.

By then, I had become surprisingly good at getting around with my brace. I had even figured out how to slide into a base much as I had before.

Or so I thought.

Our makeshift baseball diamond had a home plate fashioned from a flat rock carefully embedded in the ground. One day, I came charging toward home and went into a slide with my rigid left leg leading the way.

My brace struck the rock and **snapped.** It broke cleanly near my suspended left foot. Suddenly, I couldn't walk at all.

I could hop a little on my good leg, but that wasn't going to get me very far. With Rob's help, I eventually made it to the school nurse's office.

But now I faced another roadblock. How was I going to get home?

The nurse suggested calling a taxi.

I immediately told her that wouldn't work. I knew my parents couldn't afford to pay for one.

She kindly offered to speak with the principal to see whether the school could cover the cost.

Before she had the chance, Rob spoke up.

"I can take him home on my bike."

The nurse agreed, and Rob was excused from class. Somehow, with me balanced on his bicycle and my broken brace along for the ride, he got me safely home.

The next day, my father took the brace to a local garage and had it welded back together.

When he returned it to me, he gave me some straightforward advice:

"Take it easy from now on. I can't afford to have that thing repaired again."

I suspect he knew me well enough to realize that telling me to stop playing baseball altogether would have been a waste of his breath.

Grandpa's Signpost

A roadblock doesn't mean the journey is over.
Look around. Listen to others. There may be another way.

Looking back, these childhood experiences seem small compared with the roadblocks I would encounter later in life. But the lessons were not small at all.

Before I was old enough to understand words like *resilience*, *adaptability*, or *relationships*, I was already learning what they meant.

When I couldn't bat one way, I learned to bat the other.

When I couldn't get home on my own, a friend helped me find a way.

Those lessons would stay with me for the rest of my life.

I was learning two lessons that would follow me throughout my life: there is almost always another way, and sometimes another person will help you find it.

A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

I was only eight years old when these things happened, but I was already learning lessons that would stay with me for the rest of my life.

When I couldn't play baseball the way I always had, Rob showed me another way. When I broke my brace and couldn't get home, Rob was there again—this time with his bicycle.

I learned that a roadblock doesn't always mean you have to stop. Sometimes you need to change your approach. And sometimes the person standing beside you can see a path that you cannot.

As you travel through life, don't be afraid to listen to others or accept their help. Some of the most important relationships you build will be with people who help you see possibilities you might otherwise have missed.

When life tells you, "You can't do it that way," don't hear, "You can't do it."

Simply ask:

"Then what's another way?"



With love,

Grandpa

Chapter Three: My Early Working Career

OPPORTUNITY BEGINS WITH INITIATIVE

"Don't wait until you have everything you need. Start with what you have and find a way. Have confidence in yourself" — *James Patrick Hutton*

Selling Light Bulbs Before Having Inventory

When presented with the economic challenges that continue today for many families, I didn't play the victim, but rather I went out to do something about it.

My response to this first roadblock was to start my own business – employ myself.

When I was eleven years old, I answered a newspaper advertisement looking for students to sell light bulbs in their communities. It seemed like a perfect opportunity—until I discovered that I first had to send the company money to purchase my inventory.

My parents simply didn't have the money to help me get started.

That could have been the end of my first business venture before it even began. Instead, I asked myself a question that would become familiar throughout my life:

"Is there another way?"

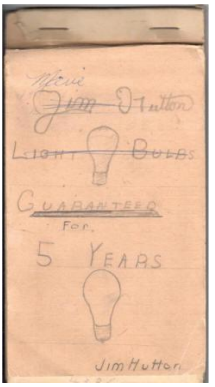
Grandpa's Signpost

Don't wait for perfect circumstances to begin. Start with what you have.

Yes there was, and I found it. I went around the neighbourhood with a notebook in hand, carrying the company's fancy brochures, and actually got people to sign up for the lightbulbs and pay me in advance. When I had orders, I gathered up the money, created a money order, and sent it to the company.

Several weeks later, I received all the lightbulbs I needed and faithfully went back to each customer to provide them with the lightbulbs that they had paid for in advance many weeks before.

Without realizing it, at eleven years old I had solved my first business financing problem.



The Actual Order Book that I used

Building Customer Relationships

What I learned at this young age is that if I wanted to make that first sale or encourage repeat sales, I had to spend time chatting with my customers. After all, I was asking them to pay for my lightbulbs before receiving the product. To do this, I needed to build their trust in me to feel comfortable that I would actually deliver their products.

I did this for two years, sometimes going back to customers who previously purchased these lightbulbs and getting them to re-order. The business was quite profitable, and by the time I was 12, I had made enough money to buy some of my own clothes.

More importantly, I was learning a lesson that would become increasingly valuable throughout my career:

People do business with people they trust.

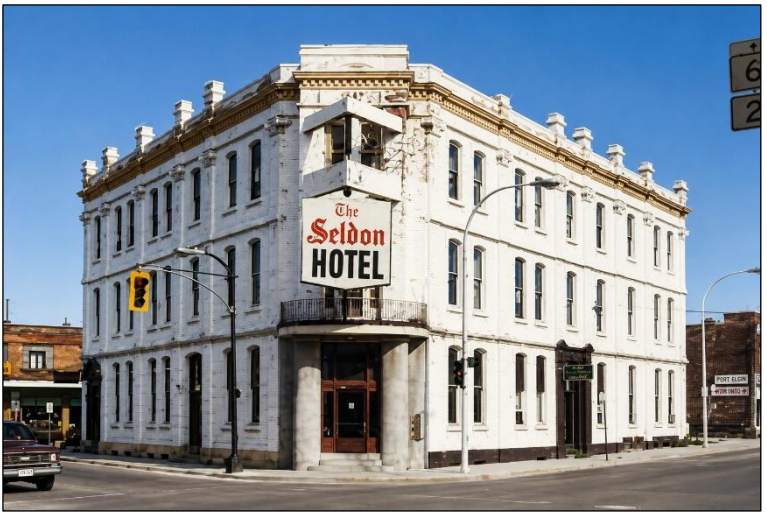
Grandpa's Signpost

Build trust before you expect opportunity.

After selling Light Bulbs for two years I was looking for bigger employment opportunities again.

Landing My First Job – at Thirteen

I answered an ad in the local newspaper. This time, the ad was looking for Bellhops to work at the Seldon Hotel in downtown Owen Sound. To my surprise, I was invited for an interview at only 13 years old and was offered the job.



Seldon Hotel Where I Worked When I was Thirteen

I worked at that job for nearly 2 years, carrying customers' bags to the room during the day and bringing them coffee and tea upon request during the evening.

As I found when selling my lightbulbs, building relationships with hotel guests paid dividends. I learned that a few kind words when carrying bags or delivering coffee to guests after hours often resulted in a much bigger tip.

I worked this job largely after school and on the weekends, but again, I was looking for something more profitable during the summer months.

Many of my friends had already concluded there was no point in looking around Owen Sound.

"There aren't any summer jobs in this town."

They weren't entirely wrong. Opportunities for students in our small town were scarce.

However, one hotel extended-stay guest gave me a huge tip – not in dollars but in an opportunity. When I mentioned that I was looking for something bigger for the summer, she told me about a friend of hers who owned a gas station with a motel and restaurant attached. She even offered to take me to meet her friend since it was located 25 miles from my hometown.

Once again, a relationship had opened a door I didn't even know existed.



"Curiosity is the courage to ask one more question,
look around one more corner, and
discover a path you never knew was there."
Never be Afraid to Ask Questions

A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

When I was eleven, I didn't have money to start a business. At thirteen, I didn't have experience when I applied for my first real job. A little later, I couldn't find the summer work I wanted in my hometown.

At each stage, it would have been easy to wait for better circumstances.

I learned instead to start with what I had.

But I also learned something equally important: opportunities often come through people. My neighbours trusted me enough to pay for light bulbs I hadn't yet received. Hotel guests trusted a thirteen-year-old boy with their belongings. And one of those guests eventually offered to introduce me to someone who would change the direction of my young life.

So don't wait until everything is perfect before you begin.

Start with what you have. Do your best with it.

And earn the trust of the people you meet along the way.



You may be surprised where those relationships eventually lead you.

With love,

Grandpa

Chapter Four: Looking Beyond Town Limits

OPPORTUNITY IS THERE IF YOU KEEP LOOKING

"Opportunity is often waiting just beyond the place where most people stop looking." — *James Patrick Hutton*

No Summer Jobs Available.

Not being one who was easily discouraged, I accepted that hotel guest's offer to drive me to meet her friend with the restaurant-motel business.

It was a very good first meeting, and she offered me a summer job based solely on that hotel guest's recommendation. She also offered to let me pitch a tent in the yard behind the restaurant and to provide meals as part of my compensation.

So, at the ripe old age of fourteen, I left home for the summer and found the job that supposedly didn't exist.

My father drove me there at the beginning of the summer. I pitched my tent behind the restaurant, and that became home until he returned to pick me up in time for school in September.

I pumped gas, cleaned the restaurant after hours, and handled whatever odd jobs needed doing. This was before self-service gas stations became common, so I also checked customers' oil and spent plenty of time talking with them while filling their tanks.

Those conversations would eventually prove more valuable than I could have imagined.

I did this for the whole summer, and at the end of the summer had what seemed to be a fortune, nearly $200. I worked at the gas station and restaurant for two summers; however, when I was 15, about to turn 16 in September, the restaurant changed hands, and the new owners had no use for a summer student.

Once again, the road ahead appeared closed.

Another Relationship, Another Opportunity

I was disappointed, but I wasn't ready to give up. I began visiting businesses around town, looking for anything that might provide summer work.

Grandpa's Signpost

When opportunity disappears, don't stop looking. Look farther.

Then, by chance, I ran into one of the customers I had often chatted with while pumping his gas.

When I told him that the restaurant had changed hands and I was looking for another summer job, he asked me an unexpected question:

"Have you ever bowled?"

Then he explained.

A friend of his owned a bowling alley near the beach, and he offered to introduce me.

Once again, a relationship opened a door.

The bowling alley owner hired me to set pins—this was before mechanical pinsetters—and to work in the cafeteria as a short-order cook. He even allowed me to pitch my tent in his backyard and included meals as part of my compensation.

It was remarkably similar to the arrangement I had lost.

One opportunity had disappeared.

Another relationship had helped me find the next one.

My First Car—and Another Lesson

In the past summers, I spent pretty much everything I earned without anything to show for it at the end of the summer. I didn't want that to happen again, so I was looking for something tangible to bring home at the end of the summer. I vividly recall at the end of August of that year, an opportunity to purchase a

car. I thought this would be a good use for the money I had saved that summer. So, I spent $200, to purchase a 1961 Studebaker Lark with a standard gear shift.

The only problem was that I didn't know how to drive, let alone operate a standard shift. This seemed like an impossible roadblock, that is, until I realized the owner needed the sale.

So, I proposed a deal.

I would buy the Studebaker if he would teach me how to drive it.



He agreed.

After two lessons, the car was mine.

For the remainder of the summer, I practiced on the quiet back roads, teaching myself how to coordinate the clutch, accelerator, and gearshift. There were plenty of rough starts, but by the end of August I could change gears without stalling the engine—or destroying the clutch.

Then came the moment I had been waiting for.

Instead of calling my father to pick me up, I drove my Studebaker home.

I was so proud of my investment and thought my father would be too – however, that would not be the case.

I pulled into our driveway enormously proud of what I had accomplished.

My father was considerably less impressed.

While I saw a car purchased with money, I had earned myself, he saw his fifteen-year-old son arriving home without a driver's license or insurance.

Looking back, I understand his reaction much better than I did at fifteen.

I had demonstrated initiative, determination, and ingenuity—but I had also taken a risk I should not have taken.

That experience taught me another lesson that would become increasingly important as my responsibilities grew:

Finding another way doesn't mean ignoring the rules or the risks along the way.

Grandpa's Signpost

Initiative opens doors.
Good judgment tells you which ones to walk through.

The Studebaker was only the beginning. Between sixteen and eighteen, I worked wherever I could find an opportunity—after school, on weekends, and throughout the summer.

I delivered prescriptions for Tamlyn's Drugstore, carried flowers across town on my bicycle for Olive McDonald's Flowers, and worked at the local Coca-Cola bottling plant. My final part-time job was driving 5-ton truck delivering fresh Orange Juice to supermarkets and corner stores.

None of these jobs seemed particularly important at the time. I was simply a teenager trying to earn money.

Looking back, I realize I was learning something from every one of them—about work, responsibility, people, and myself.

And before long, I would begin looking much farther beyond the town limits.



A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

When I was fourteen, people told me there were no summer jobs in my hometown.

They were right. So, I looked somewhere else.

That decision taught me something I've carried with me ever since: sometimes the opportunity you're looking for isn't where you expected to find it.

But I learned something else during those summers. Opportunities often came through people I had taken the time to know. A hotel guest introduced me to my first summer employer. Later, a customer I had chatted with while pumping gas introduced me to my next one. Neither relationship began because I thought the person could someday help me. I simply treated people well—and sometimes those relationships led somewhere unexpected.

So, keep looking beyond what is immediately in front of you, Marlise. But remember what my Studebaker taught me: Finding another way is important. Making sure it's a good way is just as important.



With love,

Grandpa

Chapter Five: Learn from Grandpa's Mistakes as a Teenager

EVERY CHOICE HAS CONSEQUENCES

"Good judgment isn't something teenagers lack. It's something they're still building, one broken promise and one kept word at a time."

— James Patrick Hutton

My First Serious Mistake: When My Actions Affected Others

That summer job at the bowling alley had been a lifesaver. It seemed to have fallen into my lap at just the right time. The owners, a husband-and-wife team, were very kind to me. They took me under their wing, taught me new skills, and gave me an opportunity to earn money while learning what it meant to be responsible.

They also believed in what I would later come to recognize as tough love. They understood that being given an opportunity came with responsibilities—and that failing to meet those responsibilities had consequences.

The husband worked another job from eight in the morning until four in the afternoon. Before I arrived, he would get up at seven each morning to clean the bowling alleys before heading off to work.

The owners asked me to take over that responsibility. In exchange, I would receive my meals at the bowling alley's café at no charge.

It seemed like a pretty good arrangement to me.

For most of the summer, I got up at 6:30 each morning, cleaned the alleys, and made sure everything was ready for the bowlers who arrived at eight. I understood what was expected of me, and for the most part, I did the job.

Then came one Monday morning.

decided that getting up early was simply too much trouble. I stayed in bed and went back to sleep.

I didn't give it much thought at the time. But the owner, who was counting on me to do the cleaning before leaving for his own job, suddenly had to scramble to get everything ready.

I had let him down.

The Consequences

When I received my pay cheque that week, I noticed a substantial deduction for the meals I had eaten that Monday. The meals had been charged at the regular retail price.

I questioned the owner about it. Her explanation was straightforward:

"You didn't do your job on Monday, so you didn't earn your free meals that day."

At first, I was taken aback. I hadn't really thought of it that way. But she was right.

We had an agreement. I would clean the bowling alleys each morning, and in return, I would receive my meals. I had failed to do my part, so I was not entitled to the benefit.

It was a simple lesson, but an important one.

An agreement is an agreement, even when it becomes inconvenient. And when someone is depending on you, your failure to follow through can create work and problems for someone else.

I learned that lesson, although I obviously hadn't learned it well enough.

The Consequences I Didn't See Coming

Toward the end of that summer, I heard that the new owners of the motel and gas station had failed to keep up with their payments. The original owners had taken the property back.

I paid them a visit in August and was delighted to learn that they would need my help again the following summer. That meant I

could return to the gas station and restaurant rather than spend another summer setting pins and cleaning bowling alleys.

The Labour Day weekend was approaching, however, and it would be my final weekend working at the bowling alley. It was one of the busiest and most profitable weekends of the summer.

At the last minute, I decided I would rather stay home and enjoy the holiday with my friends.

I knew the owners were counting on me. I knew they needed someone to work that busy weekend. But I decided that having fun was more important than keeping my commitment.

So I simply didn't show up.

At the time, I didn't think much about it. I was a teenager, enjoying the last few days of summer, and I didn't stop to consider the problems I had created for the people who had given me a job and treated me so well.

The consequences would not become clear until the following summer.

The Delayed Consequences

When I returned to the motel and gas station, I learned that the bowling alley owners were looking for someone to work during the summer. A good friend of mine from Owen Sound was also looking for a job, so I thought I could help him out.

I took him to meet the owners and introduced him.

They immediately told us they weren't interested.

It wasn't because they didn't need someone. They did. It was because they no longer trusted me.

My failure to show up for that Labour Day weekend had damaged the relationship. They had every reason to question whether I could be counted on. And, unfortunately, they were not prepared to take a chance on someone I recommended.

My friend lost an employment opportunity because of my past behaviour.

That was a difficult realization.

My decision had not just affected me. It had affected someone else—someone who had done absolutely nothing wrong.

I had learned that failing to honour a commitment could cost me a meal or damage a relationship. Now I understood that it could also close a door for someone who trusted me.

I had let down the owners, and I had let down my friend.

A Failure in Judgement that Cost Thousands of Dollars

My next lesson in responsibility was considerably more expensive—not for me, but for the people who had trusted me with their business.

One of my last part-time jobs as a teenager was with the Home Juice Company, which distributed orange juice throughout Owen Sound and the surrounding communities in Grey-Bruce.

My job was to drive a refrigerated truck to the plant, pick up the orange juice, and deliver it to various grocery stores and markets.

There was an established procedure for loading the truck. Any remaining stock had to be moved aside so that the new cartons could be loaded at the back. The older stock was then placed at the front, where it could be reached first and delivered before the newer product.

It was a simple system designed to ensure that the oldest juice was delivered first and that customers received fresh product.

On one particular day, I decided I didn't want to spend the time rearranging the existing stock.

Instead of following the procedure, I loaded the new cartons at the front of the truck, where they were easy to reach, leaving the older cartons behind them.

I knew what the proper procedure was. I simply chose not to follow it because taking the shortcut seemed easier.

I went about my deliveries, unloading the newer juice first. Once that was gone, I began delivering the older stock that had been left behind.

I didn't realize the damage I had caused until it was too late.

Some of the older orange juice had deteriorated, and customers who received it were understandably unhappy.

The company had to reimburse those customers for the spoiled product. Worse still, about half of them cancelled their service.

My shortcut had cost the company thousands of dollars.

The owner was remarkably kind to me, but he had little choice. He explained the financial loss and told me that he could no longer trust me to do the job.

I was let go.

This time, there was no misunderstanding about what had happened. I knew the procedure, I knew why it was important, and I had deliberately taken a shortcut because I didn't want to spend the time doing the job properly.

My actions had cost someone else a great deal of money and damaged relationships that had taken time to build.

It was a painful lesson, but one I needed to learn.

Looking Back

These experiences happened when I was a teenager. At the time, I didn't fully appreciate how much my decisions affected other people.

I was often thinking about what I wanted to do, what was convenient, or what would make my day easier. I wasn't always thinking about the people who were depending on me.

I had been given opportunities by people who trusted me. On more than one occasion, I failed to live up to that trust.

Eventually, I left high school and joined the Navy. That marked the beginning of a very different chapter in my life, but I didn't leave these experiences behind without learning something from them.

I began to understand that being dependable was about much more than showing up when it suited me. It meant recognizing that other people made plans based on my commitments.

And when I failed to do what I had promised, the consequences could extend far beyond myself.

I couldn't change those decisions. But



When you make a mistake, own it – learn from it.

Don't blame others or make excuses. Acknowledge what happened, consider who was affected, and make a genuine effort to do better. You may not be able to undo the damage or get another chance, but you can change how you act in the future.

Marlise, I don't expect you to be perfect. Nobody is. You will make mistakes, just as I did. What matters is whether you take responsibility and become a better person because of them.

One day, people will depend on you—friends, classmates, colleagues, employers, and family. Remember that your word is a promise, not just something you say.

A Letter from Grandpa

Marlise,

I want to tell you something that may surprise you.

As a teenager, I made some poor decisions. I let people down, broke commitments, and caused problems for people who had trusted me.

I'm sharing these stories not because I'm proud of my mistakes, but because I learned something important:

Your decisions don't affect only you.

When I failed to clean the bowling alleys, the owner had to do the work himself. When I didn't show up for the Labour Day weekend, I left others in a difficult position. And when I took a shortcut delivering orange juice, the company lost thousands of dollars and customers.

I learned that trust is much easier to lose than to earn. A broken promise can also have consequences long after the event, sometimes closing doors or costing you opportunities you might otherwise have had.

With Love

Grandpa



Chapter Six: He Thought He Wasn't Smart Enough

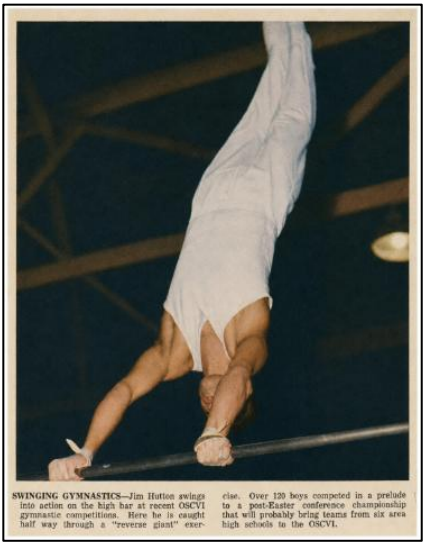
WE ARE ALL INDIVIDUALS – PRACTICE INDIVIDUAL THINKING

"Never let someone else's way of learning convince you that you're incapable of learning" — *James Patrick Hutton*

Athletic Success – Academic Failure

Academically, I struggled throughout school, and I never really understood why.

The difficulties appeared early. In Grade 7, I failed to meet the academic standard and had to repeat the year. I eventually made it to high school at fifteen, but the struggle continued. I changed programs several times, hoping that something would click. Nothing did.



SWINGING GYMNASTICS—Jim Hutton swings into action on the high bar at recent OSCVI gymnastic competitions. Here he is caught half way through a "reverse giant" exercise. Over 120 boys competed in a prelude to a post-Easter conference championship that will probably bring teams from six area high schools to the OSCVI.

Given my struggles with academics, I searched for something that I could succeed at and found that in gymnastics and weight lifting. I spent many hours in the gym lifting weights and practicing routines on all of the gymnastic apparatus. I finally found the area where I could rise to the head of the class. I became very proficient and was awarded a number of trophies. I was also selected to represent my high school at provincial competitions. I became known for demonstrating my routines during the halftime of school basketball tournaments.

I also entered a number of weightlifting competitions where I placed well. At that time, it was noted that I could bench press

twice my weight – given I had a light frame and weighed only 120 pounds, that was quite an accomplishment.

At last, I was at the head of my class.

But when I walked out of the gym and back into the classroom, everything changed.

There, I was still struggling.

Eventually, I reached Grade 12 and failed.

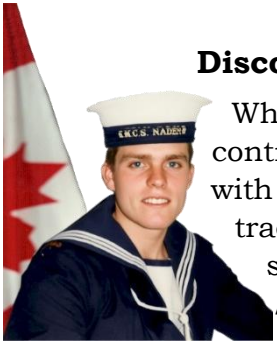
At that point, I had a decision to make. I could return and try Grade 12 again, or I could look for another path.

I chose another path.

I joined the Navy.

Grandpa's Signpost

Don't let one measure of success
determine what you believe about yourself.



Discovering That I Learned Differently

When I joined the Navy, I chose the trade of fire control technician, which was an electronics trade with the job of maintaining a x-band radar tracking system and an analogue computing system used to calculate lead-angles.

To acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for this trade, there was a long academic period as well as hands-on training. And once again, I struggled with academics and was not doing well.

While on course, I spent time chatting with a particular instructor who also had excelled in gymnastics. Once again, my propensity to build relationships saved the day.

When he noticed that I was struggling with the electronics theory, he saw that this was inconsistent with the intellect he witnessed in our many conversations.

Rather than assuming I lacked the ability, he wondered whether something else was going on.

He recommended that I undergo a psychological assessment.

That recommendation would change the direction of my life.

I was given a number of tests to complete over several days. I then met with the psychologist, who explained the results of those tests.

What he told me surprised me.

For years, I had interpreted my academic failures in the simplest possible way:

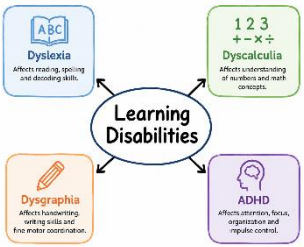
I thought I wasn't smart enough.

The psychologist gave me a very different explanation.

I just learned differently from other folks; he didn't really put a name to it, but he gave me a formula which I followed for many years.

He told me that I just had to change how I studied

Instead of learning from books, like most people, I needed to learn through videos, pictures, and discussion. As a result, I focused on discussing the electronics theory with my classmates. This seemed to be working since I no longer failed the weekly tests, and I moved from the bottom of the class to somewhere in the middle.



I graduated from this challenging electronics theory course, which would not have happened without that visit to the Navy Phycologist.

My ability hadn't suddenly changed.

What changed was the way I learned.

Grandpa's Signpost

Don't confuse struggling with one method with being incapable of learning.



God didn't make any of us perfect. Every person faces challenges, and many of us are born with limitations—whether it's a learning disability, a physical obstacle, or something else that makes life a little harder.

Don't let your limitations define you. Instead, let them develop your determination, creativity, and resilience. Some of life's greatest strengths are born from the obstacles we overcome.

The path around a roadblock often teaches us more than the easy road ever could.

Look at Your Limitations as Opportunities

A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

For years, I believed I wasn't very smart.

My school marks seemed to prove it. I had repeated a grade, struggled through high school, and eventually left without graduating. Meanwhile, I could excel in the gym but couldn't understand why I struggled so much in the classroom.

It took one instructor who knew me well enough to question what my test scores seemed to say.

That relationship changed my life.

I discovered that struggling to learn something one way doesn't mean you aren't capable of learning it. Sometimes you simply need to find the way that works for you.

So, when something is difficult, Marlise, don't be too quick to decide that you aren't good at it.

Ask questions. Try another approach. Take it apart. Keep experimenting until you discover how you understand it.

And remember a test can measure how you performed on that test. It cannot measure everything you are capable of becoming.



With love,

Grandpa

Chapter Seven: Closed Doors can Lead to Opportunities

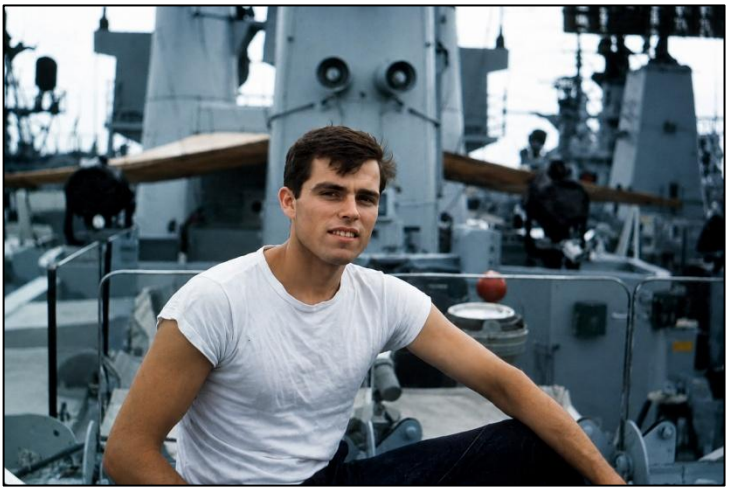
WHEN ONE DOOR CLOSES, LOOK FOR ANOTHER

"When one door closes, don't stand there staring at it. Start looking for another one" — *James Patrick Hutton*

Shipboard Electronics Technician

When I joined the Navy, I trained as a Fire Control Technician. Despite the name, the trade had nothing to do with fighting fires. We maintained the sophisticated electronic systems used to control the ship's guns.

These systems used tracking radar to follow a target and analogue computers to calculate where the guns needed to aim. My job, as part of a maintenance team, was to keep this complex vacuum-tube equipment operating reliably at sea.



Taking a Rest on the Upper Deck of HMCS Assiniboine

General Ship Duties

In addition to working as a technician, I took my turn doing a number of general tasks. All members of the ship's company stood watches (rotational duties) when at sea. These watches

involved a number of positions that we rotated through such as steering the ship, acting as lookouts at the top of the ship and acting as a Lifebuoy Sentry at the back of the ship (Quarter Deck) where we watched out for anyone falling overboard.

It was a responsibility we took seriously, particularly in rough weather.

A Sobering Introduction to Life at Sea

A week before joining my first ship, HMCS Assiniboine, a young Weapons Surface Able Seaman went up on the deck during rough weather to clear his head from seasickness. He was washed overboard when a wave hit the ship and washed him under the torpedo tubes and into the ocean.



HMCS Assiniboine in Exercising Man-Overboard Procedures

Although the Lifebuoy Sentry sounded the alarm and the ship turned around to search for him, he was never found. Interesting though, I was assigned his bunk when I joined the ship a week later and watched as the Coxswain cut the lock off his locker and cleaned it out.

A Dangerous Environment

I very much enjoyed the work I was doing aboard ship as an electronics technician; however, I learned much later that in doing so I was exposed to a number of cancer-causing chemicals like Trichloroethylene, Carbon Tetrachloride and PCBs.

I recall being sent to the half-deck where the fire control radar transmitter was located to clean up the oil from a blown transformer. I simply wiped it up with a paper towel that I stuffed in a plastic garbage bag and threw over the side when finished. The cooling oil from the transformer contained Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). What we didn't know at the time is that PCBs are highly toxic.

Exposure to PCBs can suppress the human immune system and lead to various health problems, including severe acne (chloracne), liver damage, thyroid issues, and an increased risk of cancer.

I also extensively used Carbon Tetrachloride to clean the components in the computer on a regular basis. This chemical was banned a few years later when it was discovered that it caused cancer.



Something I'll get into later.

Envisioning the Future

Several years later, after reaching the rank of Leading Seaman, I found myself one day chipping paint on the focs'le—the pointed end of the ship, for those who don't speak Navy.



I looked around at men who had been doing much the same work for ten or fifteen years.

At that moment, I had a thought.

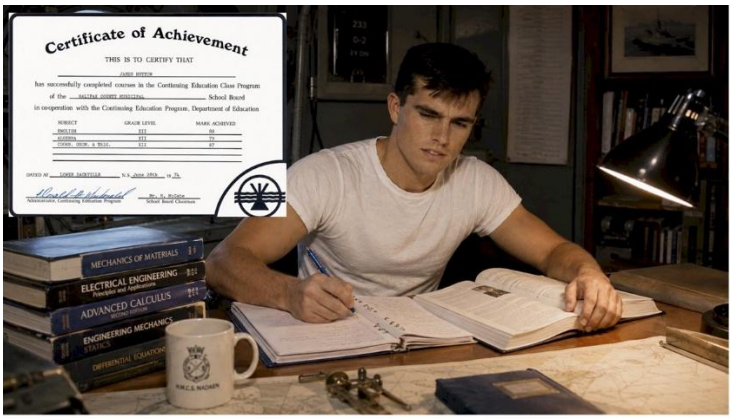
I don't want to be doing this ten years from now.

The problem was that I still didn't have a high-school diploma. If I wanted a different future, I would first have to create the qualifications to reach it.

Grandpa's Signpost

Don't wait for your future to change. Start building it.

So, I began taking correspondence courses through the Radio College of Canada while at sea. When the ship was alongside, I attended night school.



One course at a time, I completed the requirements I had failed to achieve as a teenager.

Three years later, I had my high-school diploma.

For the first time in my life, I knew exactly who I wanted to become. A Combat Systems Engineer

He was responsible for the electronics systems aboard the ship.

He wasn't my boss.

He wasn't even my boss's boss.

He was my boss's boss's boss.

And one day, I intended to have his job.

Yet Another Roadblock

Just when I thought things were finally going my way, life presented me with what appeared to be an insurmountable obstacle. I had applied for a commissioning program: the University Training Plan for Men (UTPM). A program that I felt I was well suited for, given my recent academic achievements.

I received a letter from the program on a Friday afternoon. I opened the envelope expecting good news. Instead, I found one word that changed everything.

Rejected

For a few minutes, I simply stared at the letter.

Three years of night school...

Three years of correspondence courses...

Three years of believing I was finally moving forward...

And now... another roadblock.

I gave myself one evening to be disappointed—and drowned my sorrows over a beer at the Fleet Club.

The next morning, I returned to a question that had served me since childhood: *"Is there another way?"*

Grandpa's Signpost

Rejection closes one door. It doesn't lock all the others.

The Alternative Route

Not being one to be discouraged by rejection, I immediately looked for a way around this latest roadblock. I began researching the requirements to become a Combat Systems Engineer and discovered that the Navy also accepted people into

the combat system engineering world with only a college diploma in electronics. But how could I obtain a college diploma?

After doing more research, I discovered that the Navy had a program to allow people to temporarily leave, without pay, for education purposes.

I also learned that a local college, the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology (NSIT), offered the perfect course—a two-year program in Electronics Technology.



Here is Where I Studied Electronic Technology in 1973

So, I decided to take leave from the Navy, without pay, and attend the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology to obtain that college diploma. However, without an income, this would be very difficult. Not to be discouraged, I applied for government bursaries and student loans. Given this, and largely due to my wife's income, I managed to survive for the first year.

However, survival for the second year of this two-year diploma program was very uncertain due to the economic challenges my family was facing at the time. So, I once again applied for the University Training Plan for Men (UTPM) to see if the Navy would now accept me. To my pleasant surprise – they did. However, there was a catch!

A Slight Change in Plans – Military College

I thought the Navy was going to pay for the final year of my electronics technology diploma.

Instead, they sent me across the country to Royal Roads Military College in Victoria, British Columbia. For a four-year degree Program

Royal Roads Military College

Almost immediately, I began struggling.

Seven full courses at military college were very different from correspondence courses and night school. Before long, I found myself falling behind.

The old doubt returned. Maybe the psychologist had been wrong. Maybe I really wasn't smart enough—I wanted to give up and return to the ship.

Then I remembered something he had taught me years earlier. Don't study the way everyone else studies.

Study the way you learn



Hatley Castle at Royal Roads Military College

So, I decided to apply the lessons I learned from the Navy Psychologist who taught me how to learn several years ago. To achieve this, I put together study groups, where we would discuss problems as a group. I had people asking me about certain problems in physics or mathematics, and I would respond by asking them to give me the problem in their own words. Once they did that, I found that I could easily discuss the solutions. As a result of applying this method, my grades improved, and I moved from the bottom of the class to near the top. By the end of the fourth year, I was the top student in my class and graduated with distinction.

Four years earlier, I had entered Royal Military College believing I might not survive the first semester. Now I stood at graduation at the top of my class.



Receiving my Commission at the Graduation Parade in 1979

The boy who once believed he wasn't smart enough had become an engineer.

Looking back, I don't think the difference was intelligence. The difference was perseverance. I had finally learned **how** to learn. At the time, I thought the biggest roadblocks were finally behind me. **... I was wrong !**

A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

There will probably be times in your life when you work hard for something, do everything you think is right—and still hear the word no. – I did – And more than once.

After spending three years earning the high-school education I had failed to complete as a teenager, I applied for the Navy program that I believed would take me toward becoming an engineer. They rejected me. I could have accepted their decision as proof that I wasn't meant to become one.

Instead, after one evening of disappointment, I began looking for another way.

The path I eventually found wasn't the path I had planned. In fact, it took me across the country and presented challenges I never expected. But it led me exactly where I wanted to go.

So, when a door closes, Marlise, allow yourself to be disappointed. That's human. Just don't spend so much time staring at the closed door that you fail to notice another one opening nearby. And when you find that door, have the courage to walk through it.



With love,

Grandpa

PS. Sometimes rejection forces you onto a better path than the one you originally planned.

Chapter Eight: Asking a Better Question

THE RIGHT QUESTION CHANGES EVERYTHING

"Sometimes solving the problem means asking a different question"
— James Patrick Hutton

Graduate School and Research in the Arctic

Graduation wasn't the end of my education.

In many ways...

it was only the beginning.

After twelve years of working toward qualifications I once thought were beyond my reach, I found that I genuinely enjoyed academic life.

Rather than returning immediately to full-time Navy duties, I applied for the Navy's prestigious Postgraduate Training Scholarship Program.

As part of the application process, I needed to obtain a commercial scholarship, which I obtained from the Gulf Oil Company. I learned just before graduation that I was accepted into the program and approved to attend the University of Victoria with full pay and allowances. I also received a bursary from the University of Victoria, which put me in a much better place financially than I was in when I last attended a civilian academic institution – Nova Scotia Institute of Technology.

Another Impossible Assignment

I was looking forward to advancing my learning when I began my studies toward a master's degree in science . Then I was given what appeared to be an impossible research assignment.

My graduate thesis was sponsored by Defence Research Canada and involved researching acoustics needed to track submarines underneath the Arctic ice.



An Illustration of a Submarine Transiting Under the Ice

There was only one problem.

The project didn't have funding for me to travel to the Arctic.

How could I complete this research if I couldn't travel to the Arctic?

For several days...

I stared at the problem.

Trying to solve it.

Nothing worked.

Then something occurred to me.

Perhaps I was asking the wrong question.

Instead of asking... *"How do I get to the Arctic?"*

I asked... *"How can I bring the Arctic to me?"*

Grandpa's Signpost

When you can't find the answer... ask a better question.

Instead of travelling to the Arctic...

I decided to build one.

Inside an anechoic chamber



The Psychology Department had built just what I needed. They had built an anechoic chamber that they used for sensory deprivation studies. So, I built a rotating sound source in their anechoic chamber to simulate submarines transiting under the Arctic ice.

Just when I had everything set up, I learned that they had found the funds needed to travel to the Arctic —but now I didn't need to travel because I had successfully brought the Arctic to me.

The solution impressed Defence Research Canada so much so that they were confident they could redirected the Arctic travel funds to other projects.

Upon graduation, the Navy felt that I needed more academic training and sent me to the Technical University of Nova Scotia (TUNS) to study engineering. After a final year of academic studies, I was more than ready to get into the field.

Twelve years earlier…

I had failed Grade 12.

Now…

I held multiple university degrees and had completed twelve years of post-secondary education.

The difference wasn't intelligence.

The difference was that I had finally stopped asking,

"Why can't this be done?"

and started asking,

"How can it be done?"

Looking back…

I realized something important.

Roadblocks had never been the real obstacle.

They had simply forced me to think differently.



A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

When people face a difficult problem, most of them immediately begin looking for an answer.

I've learned that sometimes there's an even better place to begin.

Ask yourself whether you're solving the right problem.

When I was told to study the Arctic but couldn't afford to travel there, I spent days trying to answer the wrong question.

"How do I get to the Arctic?"

Only when I changed the question did the answer appear.

"How can I bring the Arctic to me?"

That lesson stayed with me for the rest of my life.

Whenever you feel stuck, don't immediately assume there isn't a solution.

Pause.

Look at the problem from another direction.

Ask a different question.

Sometimes changing the question changes everything.

With love,

Grandpa





Many people believe intelligence is knowing the right answers. But often, intelligence begins with asking a better question

Sometimes You Have to Ask a Different Question

Chapter Nine: Becoming the Leader Others Need

DON'T HESITATE TO LET YOUR TEAM TAKE CREDIT

"Leadership isn't about fixing every problem yourself — it's about empowering others to solve problems with you"

— James Patrick Hutton



HMCS Ottawa Entering Halifax Harbour

Ship's Systems Engineer

Thirteen years earlier, while chipping paint on the foc's'le of **HMCS *Assiniboine***, I had quietly looked up at the Combat Systems Engineer and thought,

One day, I want his job.

I was one of the fortunate few in my class to get a posting as a Department Head at sea. I had finally made it there. At the time, I was thinking that I would achieve this goal in 3 or 4 years at the most. So, it took about ten years longer than I had anticipated, but in the process, I received a well-rounded education at Military College, experienced graduate studies at the University of Victoria, and finished off my education at the

Technical University of Nova Scotia and Fleet School Halifax. In hindsight, the extra ten years were well worth it.

Now, thirteen years later...

I was walking aboard **HMCS Ottawa** as the ship's Combat Systems Engineer.

I had finally become my boss's boss's boss.

But I quickly discovered something.

Getting the job wasn't the hard part.

Learning to lead was.



My Parents Visited my Ship in Owen Sound

I was responsible for every combat, communications, navigation, computer, and weapons system aboard the ship.

More importantly, I was responsible for fifty-three highly skilled technicians.

The equipment mattered, but, the people mattered more.

It's one thing to manage and repair high-voltage systems in a 9-to-5 environment in an office building, and it's a very different challenge to manage and repair the same equipment at three in the morning while being bounced around in heavy seas.

Working Around Roadblocks


National Defence Défense nationale
Lieutenant (N) J.P. Hutton,
Combat Systems Engineer
HMCS OTTAWA
Telephone: (902) 416-0543
Canada

During my time in HMCS Ottawa, we had several difficult equipment breakdowns that challenged every creative bone in my body. I recall on one occasion, halfway through a major fleet exercise, our long-range radar suddenly went silent.

Every technician aboard knew what that meant. The transformer in the signal amplifier had failed.

We didn't have a spare.

For a few moments, nobody said very much.

We all knew the obvious answer.

The radar was finished for the exercise.

Then...

I had another thought.

Was there another way?

I thought back to the many hours of electronic theory I studied. All that the transformer did was match the impedance between amplification stages. In most cases, impedance matching is achieved using transformers. However, it could also be achieved using a vacuum tube. So, I designed a circuit using a vacuum tube to match the impedance between stages.

That little workaround saved the day by getting our long-range radar up and running for the remainder of this critical Exercise. The radar remained operational for the rest of the exercise.

That day reminded me that leadership isn't having all the answers.

It's remaining calm long enough to help your team discover one.

Grandpa's Signpost

Great leaders build confidence in others.



HMCS Ottawa in Transit to the Great Lakes

I very much enjoyed my time as the Combat Systems Engineer in HMCS Ottawa. Then, in 1986, I was posted to National Defence Headquarters to join a team that was responsible for the development of naval software for the new Canadian Patrol Frigates (CPF). These ships were just on the drawing board at the time - a project that I would join some four years later.

Lt(N) Hutton is a completely dedicated officer who has performed any number of small miracles in keeping the Combat Systems in my ship operating. He has motivated his technicians thoroughly and they have willingly followed his lead such that they too won't give up on a task until it is complete. I have confidence in Hutton, his advice is invariably sound and his solutions to technical problems demonstrate great flexibility and an innovative approach rarely seen.

Commander K.C.E. Beardmore
Commanding Officer HMCS Ottawa

However, I would leave on a high note. My time in HMCS Ottawa was very much appreciated by the ship's captain, who recommended me for promotion. Shortly after that recommendation, I was promoted to Lieutenant Commander.

This promotion was unexpected since I had only completed a single job as a Lieutenant (Navy) – most do two or three jobs before being promoted.

Looking back...

I don't think I was promoted because I solved technical problems.

I think I was promoted because I helped other people solve them.

Software Engineering Project Manager

I joined the Directorate Maritime Combat Systems (DMCS) in 1986 in the Software Development and Policy Section. DMCS was one of five Directorates under the Director General of Engineering Maintenance.

While assigned to DMCS 8, I was responsible for a number of contracts with local engineering companies and played a role in the development of naval software standards. The basis for the Canadian Navy software development standard was the United States Navy's standard DoD Std 2168 which provided the framework for Software Quality Assurance.

While in this role I was also assigned the responsibility for naval officers selected for graduate training in software engineering at Boston College. In this capacity, I managed the first two candidates in the program.

This role also provided me with my first opportunity to manage complex engineering and development contracts with industry.


National Defence Défense nationale

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Canada

For the first time, I found myself responsible for ensuring that engineering companies delivered what they had promised.

It taught me another important lesson:

Managing people isn't about accepting excuses.

While in this position, I had several opportunities to demonstrate how to overcome apparent insurmountable obstacles.

It's about helping people succeed while holding them accountable.

> *"Lieutenant Commander Hutton is a top-notch officer whose performance has been remarkable. He is a most capable and industrious officer who has demonstrated an exceptionally high level of professionalism. He is a highly competent engineer and he is ready to assume the duties of a higher rank. He is strongly recommended for promotion."*
>
> Rear Admiral D.R. Boyle
> Chief of Engineering and Maintenance

My ability to provide creative solutions to long-outstanding problems earned me another promotion, this time to Commander.

Grandpa's Signpost

Make difficult problems easier for everyone else.

It was the second consecutive promotion that came much sooner than expected. I considered it a tremendous honour.

Looking back...

I realized organizations don't promote people simply because they work hard.

They promote people who make difficult problems easier for everyone else.



My Thoughts on Leadership

Leadership is about helping others succeed.

Over the years, I have come to understand that leadership has very little to do with rank, position, or authority. Those things may give someone the power to make decisions, but they do not automatically make that person a leader.

Leadership begins when other people start depending on you.

I believe a leader's most important responsibility is to help others succeed. That means creating an environment where people feel valued, respected, and confident enough to contribute. The best leaders don't assume they have all the answers. They listen, encourage new ideas, and bring people together to solve problems.

My approach can be summed up in four principles:

- **Listen before you speak.** Some of the best solutions come from people whose opinions might otherwise go unheard.
- **Encourage before you criticize.** Help people recognize their abilities and build the confidence to contribute.
- **Teach before you take over.** Give others the opportunity to learn, grow, and develop their own solutions.
- **Hold people accountable while helping them succeed.** Set clear expectations, offer support, and address shortcomings fairly.

I also believe trust is essential. It cannot be demanded; it must be earned through honesty, consistency, respect, and genuine concern for others. When people trust one another, they are more willing to share ideas, accept responsibility, and work together through difficult challenges.

And when success comes, share the credit. A leader doesn't need to be the centre of attention. If the team succeeds, the leader succeeds. Recognize the contributions of others and accept responsibility when things go wrong.

Ultimately, leadership isn't measured by how many people report to you or how impressive your title may be. It is measured by whether people become more capable, confident, and successful because of your influence.

The best leaders don't build their success by making themselves indispensable. They build it by helping others achieve things they might never have thought possible.

A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

When I was younger, I thought leadership meant becoming the person in charge.

I eventually learned that leadership has very little to do with titles.

The best leaders aren't the ones who always have the answers. They're the ones who help everyone around them find answers together.

As you grow older, you'll probably find yourself leading people in one way or another.

When that day comes, remember this:

Listen before you speak.

Encourage before you criticize.

Teach before you take over.

And never worry about who receives the credit.

If your team succeeds, you succeed.

I've discovered that people rarely remember the smartest leader. They remember the one who helped them become better than they thought they could be.



With love,

Grandpa

Chapter Ten: The Power of Relationships

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS …WILL PAY FUTURE DIVIDENDS

"Leadership isn't about solving every problem yourself — it's about building the relationships so others can solve problems with you" *— James Patrick Hutton*



Canadian Ships Refueling in Transit to the Persian Gulf

When I was promoted to Commander in the spring of 1990 and posted to the West Coast as HQ Commanding Officer and Senior Engineer of the Second Canadian Destroyer Squadron, I stepped into a role where relationships, trust, and collaboration mattered more than ever. The world was shifting, and Canada's Navy was about to be tested in ways we had not seen in decades.

Technical knowledge still mattered.

But I was about to discover that something mattered even more.



Trust

Grandpa's Signpost

The strongest teams are built on trust.

A World on Edge

The Persian Gulf War erupted with Iraq's overnight invasion of Kuwait on 12 August 1990. Within days, President George H.W. Bush and Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher were assembling a coalition of nations determined to stop further aggression and restore Kuwait's sovereignty. Backed by UN Security Council resolutions, Operation Desert Shield took shape.

Canada joined that coalition. We committed ships, aircraft,



gulf — The Sun Times, Owen Sound, Wed., Jan. 16, 1991 — 11

Parents proud of son's promotion

By PAM HEAVEN
SUN Times staff

Owen Sound parents John and Marie Hutton are proud of their son's promotion, but they're not happy about his new job location.

Commander James Hutton, 41, was recently appointed the senior technical officer of the Canadian naval task group in the Persian Gulf.

When he returns to the Middle East Feb. 1, Commander Hutton will be in charge of the technical maintenance for all three Canadian Armed Forces warships.

"You can't help but feel proud," said his father, John, at their 13th Ave. E. home Tuesday. "But it would be nice if the Canadians stayed home."

Commander Hutton spent a month in the Persian Gulf before returning to Canada for Christmas. But he didn't tell his parents to spare them the worry.

The Owen Sound native now lives in Victoria, B.C. with his wife Patricia Anne and their two children, Robyn, 8, and Brian, 7.

"I try not to think of it," said his mother, Marie. "I get so worked up about it."

"I really think down deep that he'll be OK, but then you never know," said.

The commander will spend most of his time jumping from ship to ship by helicopter, John said.

But a high rank doesn't ease his father's worries. "If there was a terrorist they would grab him because he's a pretty important fellow," John said.

An OSCVI graduate, Hutton joined the Canadian Navy 23 years ago as an ordinary seaman. Through the military, he achieved a Bachelor's degree in science and a Master's degree in underwater acoustics.

He became a combat systems engineering officer on the HMCS Ottawa in March 1984 and served four years at the National Defence Headquarters in Canada's capital city.

Cmdr. James Hutton

and—for the first time—women in combat roles. It was a moment of profound change for our military and a moment that demanded unity, clarity, and leadership grounded in relationships.

An East Coast squadron was deployed first. Our West Coast squadron was tasked to relieve them in January 1991. To be ready, we had work to do.

Overcoming Technical Challenges Through Collaboration

Most of our destroyers were 20–30 years old. To be effective in the Gulf, they needed modern combat systems—systems originally destined for the new Canadian Patrol Frigates still under construction.

Borrowing and installing these systems was a massive undertaking, one many believed was impossible within the timeline.

But leadership is rarely about having perfect conditions. It's about bringing people together to create solutions that didn't exist before.

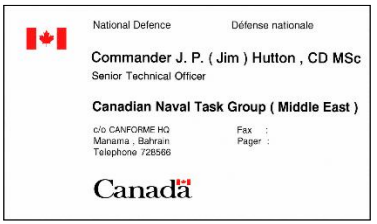
The technical challenges were real, but the relationships we built—across contractors, engineers, ship's crews, and commanding officers—made the impossible achievable.

Many believed it couldn't be done in time.

They underestimated what committed people working together could accomplish.

Into the Persian Gulf

To prepare our squadron, I deployed to the Gulf to establish the support, maintenance, and supply networks we would need. I traveled through the UAE, Bahrain, and Qatar, visiting shipyards and assessing their capabilities.





My Persian Gulf Business Cards in both English and Arabic

It was a tense time. Saddam Hussein was firing SCUD missiles and he had used them to deliver chemical weapons in the past.

Given this, I carried a chemical weapons suit everywhere I went and had been given a cocktail of protective drugs before departure.

Kidnappings of Westerners was a going business at the time. Traveling alone in civilian clothes with a green Canadian government passport—ironically a beacon for kidnappers seeking high-value targets—forced me to rely heavily on situational awareness, diplomacy, and the relationships I built on the ground.

Those efforts were recognized, including a rare early promotion recommendation from Admiral Summers. But more importantly, they reinforced a truth I carried throughout my career:

Relationships are the Foundation of Operational Success.



Commanding Officer, CPF Detachment

After two demanding years as the Senior Engineer of a Squadron of ships, I was selected to establish and lead the West Coast detachment for the Canadian Patrol Frigate Project—a $10-billion modernization effort that would define the future of Canada's Navy.



My role was to receive each new ship from the East Coast yard, resolve outstanding construction and warranty issues, conduct full combat and marine systems trials, and deliver each vessel ready for operational duty.

The work was complex. The stakes were high. And the relationships were everything.

The Challenge of Herding Cats

Coordinating the efforts of dozens of stakeholders—each with competing priorities—was like herding cats on a rolling deck.

Five major systems contractors wanted sign-off on their installations. The Admiral's staff wanted ships available for public relations tours. Engineers needed controlled environments. Crews needed training time.

Everyone had a preference. Everyone had a hidden agenda.

Grandpa's Signpost

Never Underestimate the Value of Consensus Building.

To bring order to chaos, every Friday, I brought everyone into one room.

Contractors, Engineers, Naval officers, Project managers.

Fifty to sixty people with different agendas and different priorities, but with …

One common objective.

Consensus wasn't easy. But Leadership isn't about forcing agreement. It's about creating an environment where agreement becomes possible.

The Weight of Responsibility

The consequences of error were enormous. A single mistake could cost lives.

Shortly after I left the detachment, a technician installed the wrong attenuators during a test of HMCS Winnipeg's illumination rocket launcher. The rocket fired while the ship was in harbour, flew four miles, and struck a building in Victoria.

Miraculously, no one was hurt.

Incidents like that underscored the seriousness of our work. For four years, I worked 10–12 hours a day, often seven days a week. The responsibility was relentless, but the mission—and the people—made it meaningful.

A Leadership Lesson That Endures

By the time I completed my role with the CPF Detachment, I knew I was ready for a new chapter. The work had been demanding, exhilarating, and transformative. It taught me one of the most important lessons of my career:



"Leadership isn't defined by the problems you solve. It's defined by the people you empower, the relationships you build, and the trust you earn along the way."

Those relationships carried us through uncertainty, through technical challenges, through operational pressure—and ultimately, they shaped the leader I became.

Looking back...

I don't remember every technical problem we solved.

I remember the people.

The trust we built.

The relationships we formed.

The confidence we gave one another.

That's what made the impossible possible.



A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

As a little girl, you'll probably think that the smartest person is the one who knows the most.

I used to think that too.

Eventually I learned something different.

The best leaders aren't the ones with all the answers.

They're the ones who bring good people together and help them solve difficult problems.

Throughout my career, I discovered that trust is like money in a bank.

You build it slowly...

one conversation...

one promise kept... one act of honesty at a time.

Then one day, when life becomes difficult, you discover just how valuable those deposits have become.

Never build relationships because you think someone might help you someday. Build them because people deserve kindness, respect, and honesty.



The opportunities will take care of themselves.

With love,

Grandpa

Chapter Eleven: Reinventing Yourself

ALWAYS STRIVE TO REACH YOUR TRUE POTENTIAL

"Growth begins the moment you decide you're not finished becoming who you can be" — *James Patrick Hutton*

The Courage to Change Direction

After almost 30 years in the Navy, I discovered that my greatest challenges were not technical or operational — they were learning how to bring 26 stakeholders with competing agendas into alignment.

Week after week, I had to create consensus where none existed.

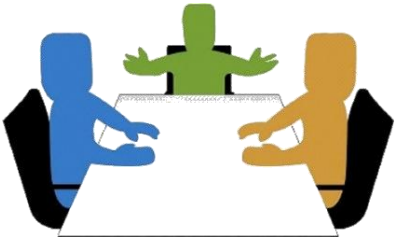
I realized I had a talent for mediation, for helping people find common ground, and for navigating emotionally charged disputes.

The most valuable skill I had developed wasn't engineering.

It wasn't project management.

It wasn't even leadership.

It was helping people find common ground.



Once I recognized that, my career began moving in a completely different direction.

That spark led me to make a bold move: I applied to become the Registrar of the Public Service Appeal Board for the BC government. It was a leap into a completely different world — a quasi-judicial tribunal where decisions shaped careers, livelihoods, and futures. Reinvention had begun.

Grandpa's Signpost

Growth begins just outside your comfort Zone

Creating Solutions Where None Existed

When I arrived, the Board was drowning in appeals. Every case went straight to a formal hearing — a slow, expensive, and often unnecessary process. The backlog was growing, and the Board didn't have the resources to keep up.

Instead of accepting the status quo, I asked a simple question:

"What if we could resolve disputes before they required adjudication?"

With my team, I built an Early Dispute Resolution process — a space where people could talk openly, understand the facts, and find common ground. Over time, we refined it, strengthened it, and made it part of the Board's culture.

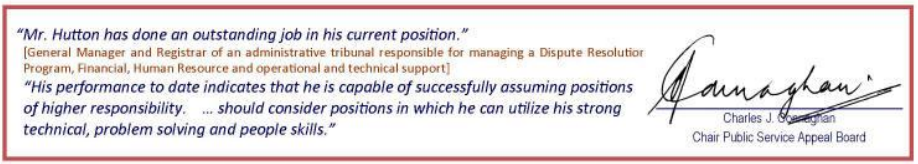
By 2001, only **20%** of appeals needed a hearing. Reinvention had become impactful.

Using Technology to Transform an Institution

My engineering background also helped modernize the Board. We became the first administrative tribunal in British Columbia to offer online filing and video hearings. We didn't just improve the system — we brought it into the 21st century.

Technology wasn't the goal.

Better service was.


"Mr. Hutton has done an outstanding job in his current position."
[General Manager and Registrar of an administrative tribunal responsible for managing a Dispute Resolution Program, Financial, Human Resource and operational and technical support]
"His performance to date indicates that he is capable of successfully assuming positions of higher responsibility. ... should consider positions in which he can utilize his strong technical, problem solving and people skills."
Charles J. Gonaghan
Chair Public Service Appeal Board

A Roadblock That Became a Turning Point

When the provincial government changed, I knew the Board's days were numbered. They had opposed it for years, and closure

was inevitable. I could have waited for the axe to fall — but reinvention requires foresight.

At my wife's suggestion, I enrolled in an Executive MBA at Royal Roads University. Two years later, the Board was disbanded. I didn't lose my footing; I had already built my next one.

The Power of Networking

One of the most important lessons I learned is simple: relationships open doors that résumés cannot.

During my MBA studies, I built a connection with the Vice President of Finance and Administration — someone whose career path I admired. When my role at the Board ended, he happened to be looking for a Facilities Manager. Because of our relationship, I didn't just apply — I was invited.

Networking isn't about collecting contacts. It's about building genuine relationships that grow over time.

Grandpa's Signpost

Relationships open doors that résumés Cannot

A New Beginning at Royal Roads University

As Director of Facilities, I inherited something far more difficult than aging buildings.

I inherited discouraged people.

Reinvention wasn't just something I was doing personally; it was something I needed to inspire in others.

I gave them autonomy. I listened. I treated them with respect. I handed out business cards to every service staff member to reinforce their importance. Within weeks, morale skyrocketed. Productivity followed.

People don't thrive under control.

They thrive under trust.

With my MBA fresh in hand, I also oversaw three profit centers — the Bookstore, Residence, and Food Services. Once again, the key wasn't micromanagement. It was unleashing the creativity of managers who had ideas but lacked encouragement.

Respect is a catalyst.

Empowerment is fuel.



When Values Demand a New Path

After a few years, the university's financial struggles made it impossible to maintain safe facilities. I faced a choice.

Compromise my principles…

or leave.

I chose to leave.

Reinvention sometimes means walking away from what no longer aligns with who you are.

Looking Beyond Familiar Places

I knew I needed a role with a stronger business component to fully apply my MBA. So, I looked beyond my city, beyond my comfort zone, and beyond the familiar. That decision led me to Seneca College in Toronto as Director of College Services and Ancillary Business Development.

It reminded me of being 13 years old, searching for a summer job when none existed in my hometown. Opportunity rarely comes to you.

Sometimes…

you have to go looking for it.

A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

One of the biggest mistakes people make is believing they have to spend their entire life doing the same thing.

I used to think that too.

Over the years I discovered that every new chapter of my career began with the courage to become something I had never been before.

I left engineering to help people resolve disputes.

I left government to study business.

I left one university for another college.

Each time, I wasn't abandoning my past. I was building on it. Don't ever be afraid to reinvent yourself. Everything you've learned up to that point will travel with you.

Your experiences don't disappear. They become the foundation for whatever comes next.

So, if one day your heart tells you it's time for a new adventure...

listen.



With love,

Grandpa

Chapter Eleven: Create Opportunities

ALWAYS BE PREPARED TO LEARN NEW SKILLS

"*Business development isn't about chasing opportunities — it's about creating the conditions where opportunities chase you"*

— James Patrick Hutton

Leaving Royal Roads University wasn't easy.

I enjoyed the work, but I knew I had reached another crossroads.

Once again, life presented me with a choice.

Stay where I was...

Or begin again.

Looking back, I've come to realize that some of the greatest opportunities in my life came disguised as uncomfortable changes.

Seneca College became one of those opportunities.

Grandpa's Signpost

Create opportunities instead of waiting for them

Seneca College – Toronto, Ontario

Leading a Major Institution
Through Strategy and Relationships

When I became Director of College Services at Seneca College, I stepped into one of the largest operational portfolios in Canadian post-secondary education. Seneca was the biggest college in the country, with more full-time students than the population of my hometown. My responsibility spanned four cost centers and five ancillary profit centers across eight campuses, serving 20,000 students and generating roughly $33 million in annual revenue.

My division touched nearly every part of student life: transportation, security, inter-campus mail, six retail stores, fourteen food service outlets, parking services, Eaton Hall hotel and conference center, two student residences, and a suite of ancillary businesses. It was a complex ecosystem that demanded collaboration, diplomacy, and the ability to build consensus across unions, student associations, faculty, and senior leadership.



Transforming a Division

Over the next three years, my team and I delivered revenue improvements of roughly $3 million—results that came from modernizing operations, introducing new businesses, and rethinking old ones.

I launched several new business development initiatives:

- a new food service outlet,
- a student-focused convenience store,
- an ATM business,
- and multiple advertising projects.

Together these initiatives increased our division's contribution by nearly sixty percent.

At the same time, we overhauled existing operations. Parking was a prime example. For decades, attendants manually collected fees at each lot—a labor-intensive, outdated process. When I asked one long-serving manager why we still did it that way, he replied with the classic phrase:

"We've always done it that way."

Every time I hear those words, I know there is probably a better solution waiting to be discovered.

That conversation opened the door to change. He introduced me to a friend of a friend, who ran a small parking business, and together we modernized parking across all campuses with automated gates and payment machines. The result: $700,000 in

annual savings—and a professional relationship that later proved valuable in my next role.

Grandpa's Signpost

Never be Afraid to Challenge the Status Quo.

We also transformed the student residence.

Instead of allowing the buildings to sit largely unused during the summer, we repositioned them as a hotel and conference center.

A small change in thinking created significant new revenue. We achieved $1.2 million in growth over two years—a 144% improvement

The student Residence was managed by a local company that specialized in running student residences across Canada.

Whenever the owner visited campus...

I made time to talk with him.

He had built a successful business, and I discovered that every conversation taught me something new.

Once again... a relationship quietly became an education.

This was yet another relationship that I would rely on to solve problems in my next position as a Vice President.

And then there was the partnership that changed everything: a private investor committed $10 million to build a destination spa at Eaton Hall, with guaranteed employment for Seneca graduates. It was one of the most significant ancillary partnerships in the college's history.

Closing a Department—The Right Way

Not long after arriving, I faced a challenge that tested those skills. The Transportation Department—once essential for moving students between campuses—was now underperforming. Students preferred their own transportation, and demand had

collapsed. The numbers were clear: the service was no longer viable.

But closing a department in a college environment is never simple. It affects people, jobs, and long-standing expectations. So, rather than announcing my decision...

I invited everyone into the discussion.

Together, we examined the facts.

We explored alternatives.

We listened to every concern.

In the end...



everyone reached the same conclusion.

The department had to close

Grandpa's Signpost

People support what they help create.

That moment reinforced a leadership truth I had learned in the Navy and refined at the Public Service Appeal Board: people will accept difficult decisions when they feel respected, informed, and included. This is something that would serve me for the rest of my career. To put it succinctly:

People don't have to like the decision
if they believe the process was fair

Creating Opportunity for Two People

Some challenges weren't about budgets or business plans—they were about relationships, creativity, and understanding people.

One day, the Vice President of Finance and Administration asked me to solve a problem the President had raised. At the college's main entrance, a man was operating an unsightly portable

hot-dog booth on the city's road allowance. It wasn't college property, and although he was violating a city bylaw, the city had no interest in enforcing it.

It was a classic roadblock: a problem that wasn't technically mine, but still affected the college's image.

The solution arrived unexpectedly. Some of the most important conversations in my career didn't happen in boardrooms. They happened while waiting in line for a cup of coffee.

While standing in line at our on-campus Tim Hortons, I struck up a conversation with a newcomer from Afghanistan who was looking for work. He and his wife had run a small business selling authentic Halal sausage before coming to Canada. Given our large Muslim student population, I asked if they would be interested in opening a small Halal food booth on campus.



He was thrilled. Within a week, his new booth was up and running. Within three months, the illegal vendor left on his own.

But the story didn't end there.

That Afghan entrepreneur went on to build a thriving business with multiple Halal food stands across the GTA. And every year since, he has phoned me on my birthday, on Father's Day —and every Christmas, despite not celebrating it himself. A simple conversation in a coffee line became a relationship that has lasted two decades.

Leadership Through People

My time at Seneca reinforced a lesson that has followed me throughout my career:

"Success is Never Achieved Alone"

Every improvement, every new business, every partnership was built on the willingness of my staff to innovate, collaborate, and challenge old assumptions.

Seneca was a place where scale met opportunity, and where relationships—built with students, staff, partners, and even strangers—became the foundation for lasting change.

Looking back...

I sometimes wonder what would have happened if I hadn't started that conversation while waiting for my coffee.

Perhaps nothing.

Or perhaps I would have missed one of the most rewarding relationships of my career.

Life is full of moments that seem ordinary.

Sometimes...

they become the moments that change everything.



People can often help you solve the problems if you take the time to listen. Even hard decisions become easier when people feel heard.

"Always Listen Carefully – Focus on Their Words"

A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

As you grow older, you'll discover that opportunities don't always arrive with a sign announcing themselves.

Sometimes they look like problems.

Sometimes they look like change.

Sometimes they're simply the person standing beside you while you wait for a cup of coffee.

One conversation can lead to a lifelong friendship.

One idea can grow into a successful business.

One decision can completely change the direction of your life.

That's why I hope you'll always stay curious about people.

Talk to them.

Listen to their stories. Most Importantly ask questions.

You never know where a simple conversation might lead.

Some of the greatest opportunities in my life began with nothing more than saying...

"Hello."

With love,

Grandpa



Chapter Thirteen: The Return on Relationships

THE RELATIONSHIPS YOU BUILD TODAY … SOLVE TOMORROW'S PROBLEMS

"Roadblocks are not barriers — they are turning points. And the relationships you build with kindness and respect will become the bridges that carry you over them." — *James Patrick Hutton*

Every few years during my career I became restless.

Not because I was unhappy.

Quite the opposite.

When I felt I had learned everything a position could teach me, I began looking for the next challenge.

Looking back, I realize that growth almost always began the moment I became willing to leave the comfort of success.

I learned long ago that sometimes the only way to rise is to step beyond the familiar and plant yourself where your ambition has room to expand.

Grandpa's Signpost

When you feel comfortable – it may be time to change.

After three successful years at Seneca College, I felt that familiar pull again — the sense that I had reached the ceiling of what I could accomplish there. So, I began looking for the next challenge.

It didn't take long. My business development successes at Seneca opened a door I had been aiming toward since my time at Royal Roads University: a Vice President role.



Cambrian College in Sudbury offered me the position of Vice President, Finance and Administration — a portfolio that included Human Resources, Information Technology, Facilities Management, Ancillary Operations, Security and Financial Services.

It was exactly the kind of challenge I wanted. And exactly the kind of challenge I needed.



A College in Trouble

Cambrian was struggling. Years of waste and mismanagement had drained its reserves. Successive deficit budgets had left the institution financially fragile. Staff morale was low, and the college lacked a customer-service mindset in delivering services to students.

In short: I had walked straight into a storm.

But storms don't intimidate me. They focus me.

To many people, Cambrian looked like a problem. To me, it looked like an opportunity.

Altering the Course

In my first two years, I introduced discipline into budgeting, redirected resources toward marketing and recruitment, and helped the President build a modern, student-centered institution on a sustainable financial foundation. We reshaped the workforce, modernized operations, and began rebuilding trust across the college.

But the biggest roadblock — the one that threatened everything — was Cambrian's debt.

A Radical Solution

The college had invested in capital projects that didn't pay off, leaving us with debt that strangled our ability to operate. In the

private sector, the solution would be obvious: liquidate underperforming assets.

So, I asked myself a question no one at Cambrian had ever asked:

"Why can't a college do the same?"

Our student residence was losing money due to inefficient operations and high labour costs. If we sold it, we could eliminate more than $20 million in debt and free up funds for the future. The new owner would run the business, and Cambrian would continue supplying students.

It was bold. It was unconventional. And it had never been done before.

When I proposed selling the residence, several people looked at me as though I had lost my mind.

"You can't sell a college residence."

I smiled.

Whenever someone tells me something has never been done before...

my curiosity takes over.

Grandpa's Signpost

Sometimes leadership means not being afraid to be the first.

However, convincing the Board of Governors could be another roadblock — but I had faced harder ones.

After weeks of preparation, I made my pitch to the Board of Governors at a special meeting.

For ninety minutes...

the Governors challenged every assumption.

They should have.

They weren't simply approving a proposal.

They were deciding whether to attempt something no Ontario college had ever done

I answered every question, addressed every concern, and earned their approval.

Calling on an Old Relationship

The first call I made wasn't to a lawyer.

It wasn't to a banker.

It wasn't to another college.

It was to someone I trusted: the owner of the company that managed Seneca's student residence. He was cautious — no college had ever sold its residence — but after several meetings, negotiations, and careful planning, we reached an agreement.

The deal closed. The debt was paid down. Cambrian finally had room to breathe.

A relationship-built years earlier had become the key to solving Cambrian's biggest financial crisis.

Another Roadblock, Another Relationship

Parking at Cambrian was a mess — labor-intensive, unenforceable, and leaking revenue. It reminded me of Seneca before modernization. So, I called another trusted partner: the owner of the parking company who had helped me overhaul Seneca's lots.

I wasn't calling because he owed me a favour.

I was calling because we trusted one another.

There's a huge difference.

He walked the grounds with me, assessed the challenges, and proposed a solution: automated voucher machines at every lot. The granite outcrops made installation expensive, and

procurement rules meant he had to compete for the contract. But he submitted the lowest bid and won.

The Biggest Challenge of All: Security

Security was another major financial drain. Officers earned $29 per hour, but with benefits the cost was $42 — per officer. Beyond the cost, the department had become an administrative burden for Human Resources.

The President asked me to find a solution. From a financial perspective, outsourcing seemed to offer the best long-term solution.



Two major obstacles stood in the way.

Protecting our employees.

Protecting our students.

Both mattered equally.

The first issue was manageable. The second was dangerous.

To solve it, I turned again to a relationship built at Seneca — a former employee who had started his own security company. I offered him a six-month sole-source contract to take over immediately. Once the contract was signed, the transition happened overnight. Student safety was protected, and Cambrian gained a more efficient, professional security service. The contract cost the college $21 per security officer per hour – a 50% savings.

This experience reminded me once again that relationships compound over time. Like money invested wisely, they become more valuable with every passing year.

Other Bold Changes

To stabilize Cambrian's financial future, these actions, along with several other initiatives, were necessary.

- Reduced the salary-expense ratio from 77% to 72% through strategic workforce adjustments;
- Introduced three-year Responsibility-Centered Budgeting to improve forecasting accuracy; and
- Established multiple Public-Private Partnerships to strengthen financial health.

The Lesson Behind It All

Every major breakthrough at Cambrian — every roadblock overcome, every challenge solved — came from a relationship built years earlier. The seeds planted at Seneca grew into solutions at Cambrian. The people I had helped, trusted, and collaborated with became the allies who helped me rebuild an entire institution.

Looking back, I realized that I wasn't really building a professional network. I was building a community of people who trusted one another. Trust, more than any other asset, became the currency that solved my biggest problems.

"Roadblocks are inevitable.
But **Relationships** turn
Roadblocks into
Stepping Stones."



A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

When you're young, it's easy to think that success comes from being the smartest person in the room.

Life taught me something different.

The biggest problems I ever solved weren't solved alone.

They were solved because years earlier I had taken the time to build relationships based on honesty, respect, and trust.

Notice something important. When I needed help at Cambrian College, I didn't start looking for strangers. I called people I had worked with years before.

Not because they owed me anything. Because we trusted each other.

Trust grows slowly.

One conversation. One promise kept.

One problem solved together.

One act of kindness at a time.

That's why I hope you'll never think of relationships as something you build only when you need them. Build them because people matter. One day, you'll discover they become one of life's greatest treasures.



With love,

Grandpa

Chapter Fourteen: The Roadblock That Wasn't

SOMETIMES THE BEST DETOURS AREN'T PLANNED

"When an organization changes direction, it isn't a verdict on your value — it's an invitation to rise somewhere your leadership is truly needed" — *James Patrick Hutton*

For five years, I poured my energy into rebuilding Cambrian College.

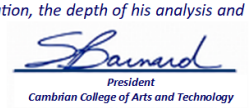
When I arrived, the college was struggling financially. Together with a talented team, we restored its financial health, modernized operations, reduced debt, and positioned the college for long-term success.

Those years became some of the most rewarding of my career.

The President recognized those achievements by awarding me the maximum performance bonus for three consecutive years—a distinction I was deeply proud to receive.

Jim demonstrated expert knowledge of the change process. He has reorganized some departments has hired a high performing Director of HR from industry, a highly competent Finance Director form the private sector. Jim brings broad understanding of all of his departments to the table, but I appreciate most his business sense and his ability to find creative solutions that are enabling Cambrian to realize its potential while operating in a more effective business manner. He has tremendous perseverance when pursuing a vision. I can rely on the accuracy of his information, the depth of his analysis and the management of risk.

Overall, Jim has demonstrated exceptional performance, leadership and vision. He is awarded the full 15% Bonus in recognition of his performance.



President
Cambrian College of Arts and Technology

I genuinely believed I had found the place where I would finish it.

Then…

everything changed.

In Ontario's college system, each college is governed by a Board of Governors responsible for appointing the President. While the Board hires the President, the President has complete authority to choose the members of the executive team.

When President Sylvia Barnard completed her term, the Board appointed a new President from Alberta.

Like every President before him, he had the right to choose his own executive team.

Two weeks after he arrived, he told me he intended to appoint his own Vice President of Finance and Administration

It wasn't personal.

It wasn't about my performance.

In fact, I had just completed the most successful years of my career.

It was simply the new President's right to build the executive team he wanted.

Grandpa's Signpost

Don't mistake a change in direction for the end of your journey.

My time at Cambrian had come to an unexpected end.

I packed my office.

Shook hands with friends and colleagues.

Walked out the front doors. And drove away.

At the time... I believed one chapter had ended.

I had no idea another was about to begin.

Looking back, I realize it wasn't a roadblock at all.

It was a detour leading me to one of the most rewarding opportunities of my life.

Planning the Future

As is common for senior executives, my departure came with a generous severance package. More importantly, it gave me something I hadn't enjoyed in decades: **time**.

For the first time in forty-eight years, my calendar was empty.

There were no meetings. No deadlines. No budgets.

No crises waiting outside my office door.

Just time to think – time to ask myself a question I had rarely considered:

What do I want the next chapter of my life to look like?

After nearly five decades of building a career, was it finally time to enjoy the things that work had so often required me to postpone? Or did I still have one more challenge left to pursue?

I spent several weeks weighing those questions.

In the end, the answer became surprisingly clear.

I could have pursued another Vice President position.

My success at Cambrian had strengthened my reputation, and I was confident it could lead to another Vice President position at a college or university.

But I had also just celebrated my sixty-fifth birthday.

Instead...

I chose something different.

I chose to leave while I still loved the work.

I chose retirement.

At the time... I believed I was retiring from my career.

Looking back...

I realize I was simply making room for work that would prove even more meaningful.



A Letter from Grandpa

Dear Marlise,

Life has a funny way of changing our plans. Sometimes, just when you think you've found the road you'll travel forever, life quietly places a detour in front of you. It can feel disappointing, unfair, or even frightening.

That's how I felt when my time at Cambrian College came to an unexpected end. One of the greatest lessons I've learned is this: Never let one person's decision determine how you see yourself. People, organizations, and circumstances will change, but your character, integrity, and kindness are things no one can ever take away from you.

When life surprises you, don't ask, "Why did this happen to me?" Instead ask, "What new opportunity might this be leading me toward?" What seemed like an ending became the beginning of one of the happiest chapters of my life.

So, Marlise, when life changes your plans—and someday it will—I hope you'll remember this: hold your head high, trust yourself, trust God's timing, and never be afraid of an unexpected road.



With love,

Grandpa

Chapter Fifteen: A New Purpose

RETIREMENT IS NOT THE END OF THE JOURNEY

"The most meaningful chapters of life often begin after the career ends. Retirement isn't about stopping—it is about choosing where your experience can make the greatest difference.

— James Patrick Hutton

A New Beginning

When people learned I was retiring, they usually smiled and said,

"Now you'll finally be able to slow down."

I smiled back.

What I didn't realize was that retirement wouldn't slow my life down at all. It would simply give me something I hadn't enjoyed in nearly fifty years—the freedom to choose how I wanted to spend my time.

Looking back, retirement wasn't the end of my career. It was the beginning of a new purpose.

Grandpa's Signpost

Retirement isn't about stopping. It's about choosing a new purpose.

However, I now faced a question I had never seriously considered.

"Where should I begin the next chapter of my life?"

After living and working across Canada for nearly five decades…

I found myself drawn back to where my journey had begun — my hometown — Owen Sound.– a small community on Georgian Bay with a population of only 21,600.

There is something comforting about returning to the place where your story started.

The streets were familiar.

The harbour was still beautiful.

The people were just as welcoming.

But something had changed.

The vibrant community I had left fifty years earlier seemed to have lost much of its momentum.

Many of the industries that had supported generations of families had disappeared. Empty storefronts lined parts of the downtown, and after half a century, the city's population had grown by only a few thousand people.

As I drove through my hometown, I found myself asking the same question that had guided so much of my career:

"How can we make this better?"

Trying to Give Back

Throughout my career, I had solved organizational problems by asking questions, studying the facts, and developing practical solutions. Retirement gave me the opportunity to use those same skills for my own community.

For six months, I immersed myself in Owen Sound's finances. I compared the city's performance with municipalities of similar size across Ontario, analyzed years of financial information, and researched successful approaches used elsewhere.

The result was a comprehensive twenty-page report filled with practical recommendations designed to strengthen the city's financial future and encourage long-term growth.

I wasn't looking for recognition. I simply wanted to give something back to the community that had given me my start.

When I presented my findings to the members of City Council, I expected discussion.

Instead, I encountered resistance.

My recommendations were politely dismissed.

At first, I was disappointed.

After all, I genuinely believed the ideas could help. Then I realized another lesson that life had quietly been teaching me for years. That is:

Not every good idea will be welcomed.

Sometimes people cling to the familiar because change is uncomfortable, even when change may lead to something better.

That didn't mean my work had no value.

It simply meant my experience was needed somewhere else.

Looking back, I realize that rejection wasn't another roadblock.

It was another detour.



A Different Kind of Service

Life had one more unexpected challenge waiting for me. Not long after retiring, I was diagnosed with cancer.

Like many Canadian veterans of my generation, I had spent my early years aboard naval ships working around chemicals that we now know can cause cancer. Fortunately, my cancer was discovered early, and surgery saved my life.

Many of my fellow veterans were not as fortunate.

As I spoke with veterans across Canada, I discovered something deeply troubling. Many were battling cancer while at the same time struggling to navigate the complex disability claims process at Veterans Affairs Canada.

Some were overwhelmed.

Some felt forgotten.

Some simply didn't know where to turn.

I couldn't change what had happened to me.

But perhaps I could help someone else.

Together with two fellow veterans who were also living with service-related cancer, I helped establish



Veterans With Cancer Inc.

Our mission was simple.

No veteran should face cancer alone.

We created a website filled with practical information about cancer, Veterans Affairs benefits, disability claims, and the experiences of veterans who had already walked that difficult road.

We also began advocating for changes within Veterans Affairs Canada, encouraging the department to recognize Carbon Tetrachloride as a proven cause of cancer among many veterans and to simplify the claims process for those already facing one of life's greatest challenges.

The work was demanding. It was often frustrating. But it was also deeply rewarding.

For almost fifty years I had served Canada in uniform and in leadership positions. Retirement simply allowed me to continue serving in a different way.

Grandpa's Signpost

The greatest purpose comes from serving others.

An Unexpected Recognition

During my work advocating for improvements to the Veterans Affairs disability claims process, I had the privilege of developing relationships with many dedicated individuals who shared a common goal—ensuring that Canada's veterans received the fair treatment and support they had earned through their service.

One of those individuals was Brian Forbes, Chair of the National Council of Veterans Associations. Throughout my research and advocacy, I had the opportunity to work closely with Brian on issues affecting veterans across Canada.

Brian was widely regarded as one of the country's most respected and influential champions for veterans' rights. Over several decades, his leadership helped shape modern veterans' legislation, expand benefits for seriously disabled veterans, and give a stronger voice to many of Canada's most vulnerable veteran communities at both the national and international levels.

For that reason, I was both humbled and deeply honoured when I learned that Brian had recommended me to receive the **King**

Charles III Coronation Medal. Coming from someone whose life had been devoted to serving veterans, his confidence in my work meant more to me than I can adequately express.



The honour was, however, bittersweet. Shortly after I learned that I would receive the medal, Brian passed away in December 2024. Although he never saw the presentation of the award, I will always cherish the knowledge that it was his recommendation that made this unexpected recognition possible.

The medal serves as a reminder not only of the work I have been fortunate enough to do on behalf of veterans, but also of Brian Forbes' remarkable legacy and the example he set for those of us who continue to advocate for those who served our country.

An Old Relationship Leads to a New Roadblock

One cold November afternoon, an old friend stopped by with an unusual request.

He had rescued an old wooden radio from his young neighbour's garbage. Knowing that I had spent years repairing vacuum tube electronics in the Navy, he asked,

"Do you think you could get it working again?
I'd like to give it to my wife for Christmas."

I looked at the dusty old radio and asked myself...

"Why would anyone throw away a piece of history?"

To many people...

it was just an old radio.

To me...

it was someone's memories.

It reminded me of my 1961 Studebaker. Lift the hood, and you can see every component. There were no computers, no hidden

electronics—just good engineering that an ordinary backyard mechanic could understand and repair.

Today's products are often designed differently. When they stop working, we replace them.

Yesterday's products invited us to repair them.

Standing there, I couldn't help thinking about the grandfather who had once proudly brought that radio home. I doubted he ever imagined it would one day be left beside a garbage bin.

I smiled and said to my friend, *"Leave it with me."*

I had no idea that a simple favour was about to become one of the most enjoyable chapters of my retirement.

That first radio became the beginning of

Old Fidelity Restorations. www.oldfidelity.com

What started as a favour quickly grew into a passion.

I wasn't really restoring old radios. I was preserving memories. Every radio had once gathered a family around it to listen to the evening news, a hockey game, or their favourite music. Restoring the radio meant preserving a small piece of someone else's story.

By Christmas, the radio had been completely restored. The electronics were rebuilt with new capacitors and worn components replaced. The cabinet was carefully refinished until it looked much as it had decades earlier.

When my friend asked what he owed me, I gave him an unusual answer.

> *"The price,"* I smiled,
>
> *"is your promise...*
>
> *that this radio will never again be thrown away."*

Over the years, I discovered that preserving history was far more rewarding than making money.

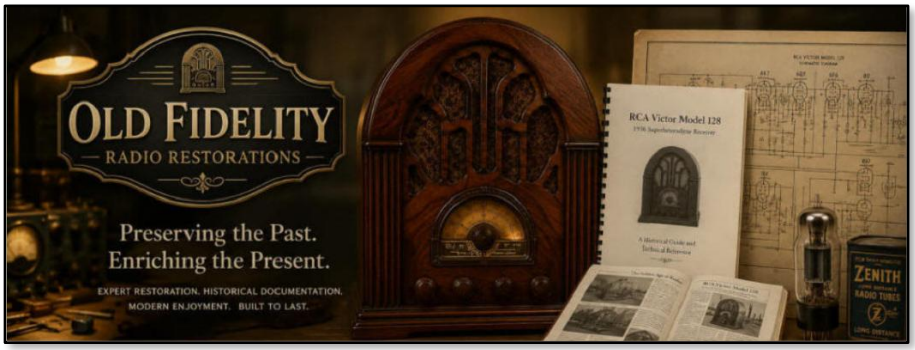
I have restored well over one hundred vintage radios.

Most were given away.

Some found new homes across Canada.

A few travelled much farther—including California, Sweden, and Northern Quebec.

Each one carried a little piece of history with it.



Another Roadblock

Then technology changed once again.

One day, our local AM radio station announced it would begin broadcasting exclusively on FM.

That created another problem.

Most of the beautiful radios I had restored could receive only AM broadcasts.

If there were no AM stations left, people would eventually stop using them.

And if they stopped using them…

Would they once again end up in the garbage?

It felt like another roadblock.

But by then I had learned something important.

Whenever life presents a roadblock…

look for another way.

So instead of accepting defeat, I looked for a solution.

I found a tiny FM receiver that cost less than five dollars and mounted it discreetly inside the cabinet where it couldn't be seen. By adding a simple switch, listeners could enjoy either traditional AM broadcasts where available or modern FM stations—all while preserving the original appearance of the radio.

The solution worked perfectly.

As I watched that first restored radio play FM music through seventy-year-old electronics, I couldn't help smiling.

It reminded me of my days aboard HMCS Ottawa, when creative thinking had allowed me to restore a failed long-range radar using an unconventional solution.

Different equipment.

Different decade.

Exactly the same lesson.

Technology changes.

Problem-solving never does.

Every radio that left my workshop reminded me that people, like old radios, should never be judged by their age. Given a little care, patience, and respect, both can continue to bring joy for many years to come.

Looking Back

People often ask me whether I've enjoyed retirement.

I always smile before answering.

The truth is...

I never really retired. I simply exchanged one kind of service for another. For almost half a century, my career was about solving problems, building organizations, and helping people succeed.

Today, my purpose is helping veterans and giving back to the community that shaped me.

The mission changed but the purpose never did.

Looking back over my life, I have come to realize something important.

Roadblocks have never truly stopped me.

They have simply redirected me toward work that mattered even more.



Always Take the Time to Look Back on
What You Have Accomplished to Date.

Take Pride in What You Have Achieved

A Letter from Grandpa

Marlise,

Many people believe retirement is the end of the journey. I've learned it's simply the beginning of another one.

There will come a time in your life when you'll have to decide how you want to spend your time, your talents, and your energy. When that day comes, I hope you remember this: A life with purpose is a life well lived.

Success isn't measured only by promotions, titles, or money. Those things are wonderful, but they don't last forever. What lasts is the difference you make in other people's lives.

When Owen Sound wasn't ready to hear my ideas, I learned that not every effort produces the result we hope for.

Don't let rejection convince you that your ideas have no value. Sometimes it simply means your gifts are meant to be used somewhere else.

When cancer entered my life, I could have asked, "Why me?" Instead, I asked, "Who can I help because of this?" So, Marlise, never stop looking for ways to serve others.



With love,

Grandpa

Chapter Sixteen: Final Thoughts

LIFE ISN'T ABOUT AVOIDING ROADBLOCKS. IT'S ABOUT LEARNING WHO YOU BECOME WHILE FINDING YOUR WAY AROUND THEM

"Life has taught me many things. Some lessons were easy. Most were not. But every roadblock, every success, every disappointment, and every friendship, helped shape the person I became. If there is one thing I hope you remember after reading this book, it is this: your circumstances do not determine your future. Your choices do" — *James Patrick Hutton*

If you've read this far, you've travelled beside me through more than forty-eight years of my working life.

You've watched me fail. You've watched me succeed. You've seen doors close and others unexpectedly open. You've watched roadblocks appear where I least expected them—and you've seen that most of them eventually led me somewhere even better.

When I first began writing this book, I thought I was simply recording my career for you. Along the way, I realized I was really writing about something much more important.

I was writing about how to live.

If, one day, someone were to ask me what I learned from my life, these would be my answers.

1. Roadblocks are part of life.

Don't waste your energy wishing they weren't there.

Everyone faces disappointments. Everyone experiences setbacks.

Everyone encounters people who say, *"It can't be done"* .

Roadblocks aren't there to stop you.

They're there to teach you something you couldn't have learned any other way.

Whenever life blocks your path, don't ask, *"Why me?"* Ask, *"What is this trying to teach me?"* That one question has changed my life more than once.

2. Ask better questions.

Looking back, almost every opportunity I enjoyed began with a question.

"Why?" "Why not?" "What if?"
"How could we do this differently?"

Most people accept things the way they are. The people who change the world ask why they have to stay that way.

Never lose your curiosity. Curiosity opens doors that talent alone never can.

3. Build relationships before you need them.

One of the greatest surprises of my career was discovering that the people I met along the way often became the people who helped me solve tomorrow's problems.

But here's the important part. I never built relationships because I expected something in return. I built them because people mattered.

Treat everyone with kindness.

Listen carefully. Keep your promises. Earn people's trust.

Years from now, you'll discover that trust is one of life's greatest treasures.

4. Never stop learning.

I wasn't always the smartest student.

In fact, there were times when school convinced me I wasn't very good at learning.

Fortunately, life taught me otherwise.

Learning doesn't stop when school ends.

Some of the most valuable lessons you'll ever learn won't be found in a classroom. Read books. Ask questions.

Listen to people who have walked the road before you.

Every person you meet knows something you don't.

5. Believe in yourself.

There will always be someone who doubts you.

Sometimes that person may even be yourself.

Don't let other people decide what you're capable of becoming.

I learned long ago that confidence doesn't come from never failing.

It comes from getting back up one more time.

Believe in yourself—even when no one else does.
… Especially then.

6. Don't be afraid to change direction.

Some of the best moments of my life began as disappointments.

Jobs ended. Plans changed. Doors closed.

At the time, those moments felt unfair.

Looking back, they were often life's way of pointing me toward something better. Trust the detour.

One day you'll understand why it was necessary.

7. Success isn't measured by titles or money.

I've held many different positions. I've received awards and recognition that made me proud. But none of those things are what I treasure most today.

The things I remember are the people. The friendships. The opportunities to help someone. The chance to leave an organization better than I found it.

Success is measured by the lives you improve.

Everything else eventually fades.

8. Be grateful.

Every day. Even the difficult ones. Especially the difficult ones.

Some of life's hardest moments became the turning points that shaped my future.

Cancer taught me compassion.

Rejection taught me resilience.

Failure taught me humility.

Success taught me responsibility.

Every experience has something to teach you if you're willing to learn.

9. Love your family.

When your career is over...

When the awards are packed away...

When people stop remembering your job title...

Family remains.

Never become so busy building a career that you forget to build a life.

The people who love you are life's greatest blessing.

Treasure them.

10. Leave the world a little better than you found it.

This may be the most important lesson of all.

Wherever life takes you, try to make someone's day a little brighter.

Help someone who can't repay you.

Share what you've learned.

Stand up for people who need a voice.

Be generous with your time.

Be generous with your encouragement.

If you can leave this world knowing that someone else's life was better because you were here...

you will have lived a wonderful life.

One Last Thought

One day you'll travel roads that I never had the chance to see. You'll face challenges I cannot imagine. You'll make mistakes. You'll celebrate victories. You'll discover dreams that are uniquely your own.

And that's exactly as it should be.

I don't expect you to follow my path. I simply hope these pages help you find yours.

Whenever life places a roadblock in front of you, I hope you'll remember the little rabbit who appeared throughout this book.

He never told you to turn around.

He never told you to give up.

He simply smiled...

pointed toward another path...

and reminded you that there is almost always another way forward.

So, stay curious. Listen carefully.

Ask better questions. Believe in yourself.

Trust the detour. Focus on your journey.

And remember...

You are never alone.

If, many years from now, you open this book again after I'm gone, I hope you won't be sad.

Instead, I hope you'll smile.

Because every page carries a little piece of your Grandpa's heart.

If these stories give you courage when life becomes difficult...

If they remind you to be kind...

If they help you believe in yourself...

Then this book will have accomplished exactly what I hoped it would.

And whenever you come to a roadblock...

I hope you'll picture a little rabbit standing beside a narrow path...

holding up one last wooden sign.

It simply says...

"You've Got This."



A Final Note to Marlise

Marlise,

If there is one thing I hope you take away from this book, it is that your life is yours to create.

I have shared my stories with you—not because I expect you to follow in my footsteps, but because I hope something in my journey will help you find your own way.

You will have wonderful days when everything seems possible. You will also have days when nothing seems to go right. There will be people who encourage you, people who disappoint you, and moments when you wonder whether you are good enough to achieve the things you dream about.

When those moments come, I hope you remember a few things.

Never underestimate yourself. You are capable of far more than you may realize.

Never be afraid to ask questions. The wisest people are often those who are curious enough to know how much they still have to learn.

Treat people with kindness. You never know what someone else may be going through, and a little kindness can make a bigger difference than you will ever know.

Build friendships that matter. Be someone people can trust, someone who listens, and someone who keeps their word.

Don't measure your life by how much money you make, what position you hold, or what others think of you. Measure it by the people you love, the experiences you share, and the difference you make along the way.

And when life doesn't go according to plan, don't be afraid to take another road. Sometimes the journey you never expected turns out to be the one you were meant to travel.

I also want you to know something important.

You don't have to be perfect. I wasn't. You will make mistakes, just as I did. What matters is that you learn from them, take responsibility for your choices, and have the courage to try again.

With All of My Love

Grandpa

Grandpa's Secrets of Success

1. Keep Yourself a Little Cold and a Little Hungry

Marlise, one of the best pieces of advice I've ever heard came from a friend's father. He simply said:

"Always keep yourself a little bit cold and a little bit hungry."

He wasn't talking about the weather or missing a meal. He meant that you should never become so comfortable that you stop growing.

When we're completely satisfied with where we are, it's easy to become complacent. But when we keep a little hunger inside us—a desire to learn more, achieve more, and become more—we stay motivated to reach our full potential.

Psychologist Abraham Maslow taught that once our basic needs are met, we naturally begin striving to become the very best version of ourselves. That's exactly what this advice encourages. Never lose that desire to keep improving.

Growing up, my family didn't have much money. That reality motivated me to work at an early age. At ten, I delivered newspapers. At eleven, I started my light bulb business. At thirteen, I worked at the Seldon Hotel carrying luggage, delivering room service, and managing the front desk on evenings and weekends. Later, I delivered flowers for Olive McDonald's Flowers and worked at Tamblyn's Drug Store.

Those jobs didn't just earn me spending money—they taught me responsibility, initiative, and the value of hard work. More importantly, they gave me the determination to build a better future.

Throughout my career, whenever I felt overwhelmed or discouraged, I reminded myself where I had started. Those memories renewed my motivation and reminded me why I was

working so hard to earn the next promotion and accept the next challenge.

Keeping yourself *"a little cold and a little hungry"* simply means refusing to settle for *"good enough"*. Believe you can do better. Continue learning. Look for ways to improve. At the end of every month, reflect on what you've accomplished and ask yourself, *"How can I become even better next month?"*

Never compare yourself with others. Compare yourself with the person you were yesterday.

Remember, Marlise: The day you become completely comfortable is the day you stop growing. Stay curious. Stay humble. Stay hungry. Your greatest achievements are still ahead of you.

2. Be Willing to Take Risks

Marlise, you cannot get ahead in life if you're unwilling to leave your comfort zone. Every worthwhile opportunity involves uncertainty, and every major step forward requires courage.

As you read about my life, you'll see that taking calculated risks was a constant. Looking back, many of the decisions that frightened me the most turned out to be the best ones I ever made.

I took my first business risk at eleven when I started selling light bulbs. I didn't have the money to buy inventory, so I collected payment from my customers before placing my orders, trusting the supplier would deliver. It worked.

At fifteen, when there were no summer jobs in Owen Sound, I got a drive to Southampton, found work at a motel and gas station, and lived in a tent behind the motel all summer. That experience taught me that opportunities usually go to those willing to look beyond what's familiar.

One of the biggest risks of my career came when I took a Leave Without Pay to study Electronic Technology at the Nova Scotia Institute of Technology. I had no income and many expenses, but

your grandmother believed in me, and together we made it through. That decision became a turning point in my career.

Years later, after earning my MBA, I left a secure senior position at a university in Victoria and moved nearly 3,000 miles to Toronto to join Seneca College. It was a difficult decision, but it opened doors that transformed the rest of my career.

Throughout your life, you'll face the same choice: remain where it's comfortable or pursue an opportunity that stretches your abilities. Growth is rarely comfortable, but comfort can easily become complacency.

I always encouraged the people who worked for me to seek greater responsibility every three to five years. If those opportunities weren't available, I told them to be prepared to look elsewhere. Never let your career stand still.

During the last ten years of my career, I made three major job changes. Each involved risk, but each brought greater responsibility, greater satisfaction, and a salary that ultimately grew by more than 300 percent.

Remember, Marlise: The greatest opportunities in life are usually found just beyond your comfort zone. Have the courage to take calculated risks, believe in yourself, and never stop growing.

RISK-AVERSE	RISK-TAKING
Short-term concerns	Long-term concerns
Fear of failure	Vision of opportunity
Culture of routine & control	Culture of creativity & innovation
Apprehension	Confidence
Complacent	Seek learning & growth

3. Develop Transitional Skills

Marlise, One day you may decide to change careers—or you may have that decision made for you. Companies close, economies change, and jobs disappear. When that happens, your greatest asset won't just be your education or your years of experience. It will be your transitional skills.

Transitional skills are the abilities you develop that can be applied almost anywhere. Skills such as leadership, problem-solving, teamwork, communication, planning, decision-making, and adaptability are valuable in every organization. They become even more important when you're competing for a new opportunity.



Keep a Record of Your Successes

One of the biggest mistakes people make is failing to document what they've accomplished. When you're busy doing your job, it's easy to forget the challenges you solved and the results you achieved.

For many years, I kept a simple record of my accomplishments using a method I called **SARs**:

Situation – What was the challenge or opportunity?

Action – What did I do?

Result – What was the outcome?

Every few months I added new SARs, and I encouraged everyone who worked for me to do the same. Whenever possible, I also asked my supervisor to confirm my accomplishments. Those records became invaluable whenever I applied for promotions or new positions.

I encourage you to write at least one SAR every month. Even if you think nothing important happened, take a few minutes to reflect. You'll almost always discover that you solved a problem, helped someone, improved a process, or learned something new. Small accomplishments add up to an impressive career.

Never Stop Learning

The best employers look for people who are committed to lifelong learning. They want people who are curious, willing to grow, and eager to develop new skills.

As you've seen throughout my story, I never stopped learning. Every new course, every new assignment, and every new challenge prepared me for opportunities I couldn't have imagined at the time.

Never assume you've learned enough. Keep reading, asking questions, seeking mentors, and trying new things. The more you learn, the more opportunities you'll create for yourself.

Remember: Your education may help you get your first job, but your transitional skills and your commitment to lifelong learning will open the doors to every opportunity that follows.

4. Value Your Education

Marlise, If I could give you only one piece of advice about building a successful life, it would be this:

Never stop investing in your education.

Of all the Secrets of Success I've shared with you, education is the most important because it opens doors that would otherwise remain closed. It has both intellectual and economic value. Every course you take, every book you read, every new skill you learn is an investment in your future that no one can ever take away from you.

Education teaches you far more than facts. It develops your imagination, strengthens your ability to solve problems, encourages creativity, and fuels your curiosity. It also gives you access to more rewarding careers, greater financial security, and the freedom to choose the life you want to live.

My father and grandfather never attended high school. In their generation, young people were expected to work on the family

farm or find an unskilled job to help support the household. Higher education simply wasn't an option for most families. I was fortunate to become one of the first in our family to attend college and university, and that decision changed the course of my life.

I've worked in physically demanding jobs, and I've also served as a Director, Vice-President, and a Commander in the Navy. Having experienced both worlds, I can tell you that the difference is about much more than money. Professional careers often provide greater opportunities to solve meaningful problems, lead talented people, continue learning, and make a lasting difference. Those opportunities bring a deep sense of satisfaction that goes far beyond a pay cheque.

Education also gives you choices. Throughout my career, whenever one opportunity ended, my education and experience allowed me to pursue something even better. Many of my friends who chose not to continue their education often found themselves limited to fewer opportunities and struggled when their jobs disappeared or industries changed.

The benefits of education continue long after your working years. Better career opportunities usually lead to greater financial security, allowing you to enjoy life's experiences instead of worrying about making ends meet. For me, it meant being able to travel, spend winters in Florida, buying the new cars I like, and enjoy retirement without financial stress. Education didn't guarantee those things—but it made them possible.

Remember, though, that education is only a tool. Like a beautiful violin, it can create wonderful music but only in the hands of someone willing to practice. To reach your full potential, education must be combined with curiosity, determination, self-discipline, and an unwavering work ethic.

So, here's Grandpa's advice:

Stay in school as long as you can. Aim to earn at least two university degrees, or pursue a skilled trade through college and

complete your apprenticeship to become a certified journeyperson. Never stop learning, because the more you know, the more opportunities you'll create for yourself.

Education isn't an expense.

It's the best investment you'll

ever make in **Yourself.**



The End…



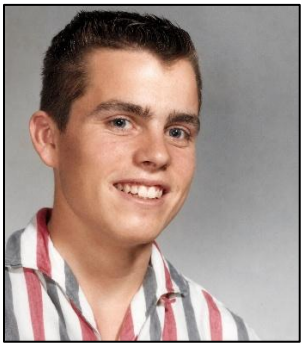
…or perhaps, for Marlise, it's just the beginning.

Photo Album



Owen Sound Crippled Children Meet "Whipper" Watson

Members of "Easter Seal" day in the Rotary Club in Owen Sound, when close to 100 Rotarians' and guests were present to meet and to hear "Whipper" Billy Watson and members who spoke of their parents at the good work being done by The Ontario Society for Crippled Children throughout Ontario and the urgent need for funds to further this work, made possible through the sale of Easter Seals. Pictured above are among Owen Sound Crippled Children, currently under the care of the Owen Sound Rotary Club, all of whom were present at Monday's meeting. Left to right, front row: Jeanne Weenert, Owen Sound's "Little Miss Easter Seal"; Eddie Dickenson, Ontario's 1958 "Timmy"; Jimmy Hutton, "Whipper" Billy Watson; Karen Prumbaugh; Linda Elliot. Back row, left to right: Kent Melbye; Jimmy Young; Marilyn Babine. Order of photo, by No. 12 — Sun Times Staff Photo.



High School Yearbook Photo



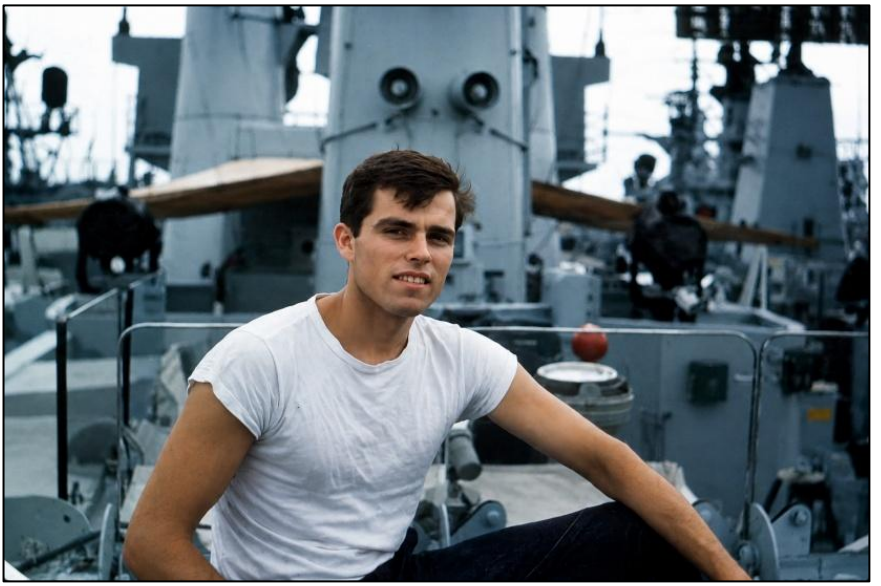
Ordinary Seaman on Training



One of My First Days Aboard HMCS Assiniboine



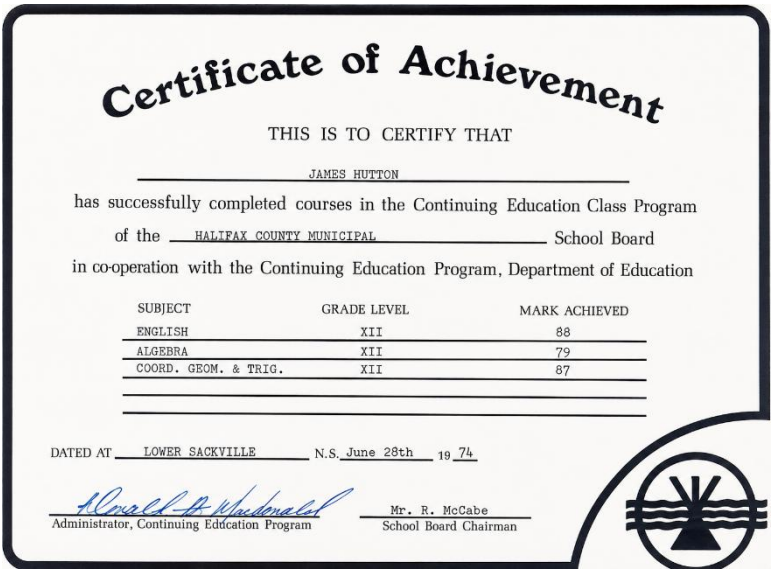
The 3” Anti-Aircraft Gun and Fire Control Radar I Maintained



Taking a Rest on the Upper Deck of HMCS Assiniboine



Ordinary Hutton Sitting on an Anchor in Boston Harbour



Certificate of Achievement

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

JAMES HUTTON

has successfully completed courses in the Continuing Education Class Program of the HALIFAX COUNTY MUNICIPAL School Board in co-operation with the Continuing Education Program, Department of Education

SUBJECT	GRADE LEVEL	MARK ACHIEVED
ENGLISH	XII	88
ALGEBRA	XII	79
COORD. GEOM. & TRIG.	XII	87

DATED AT LOWER SACKVILLE N.S. June 28th 19 74

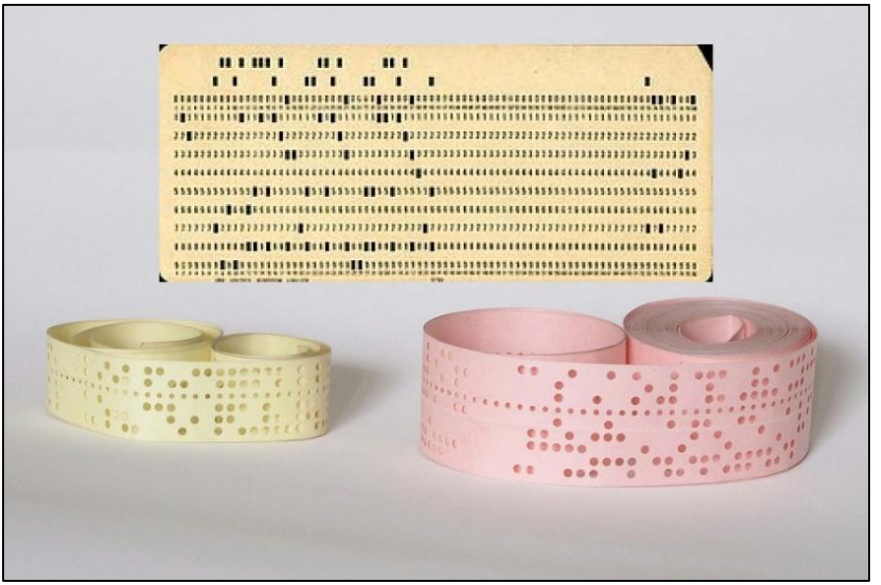
Administrator, Continuing Education Program

Mr. R. McCabe
School Board Chairman

The Final Courses Required for a High School Diploma



Attending the NSIT Electronics Technology Program



Punch Cards and Paper Tape that I used for Programming at Nova Scotia Institute of Technology



Writing Exams on the Quarter-Deck at Royal Roads Military College



Officer Cadet Hutton Leading the Sunday Parade



Final Graduation Parade at Royal Military College



Receiving my Degree at Royal Roads Military College


KING CHARLES III
CORONATION MEDAL

MEDAILLE DU COURONNEMENT
DU ROI CHARLES III

Cdr (Ret'd) James P. Hutton, C.D.

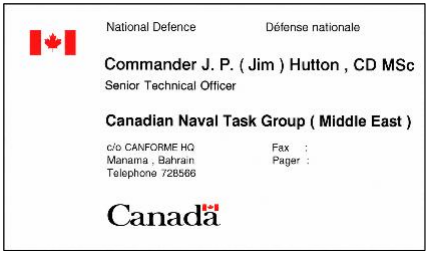
By Command of His Majesty The King,
the Coronation Medal is presented to you
in commemoration of His Majesty's Accession
to the Throne and in recognition of your
contributions to Canada.

Par ordre de Sa Majesté le Roi,
la Médaille du Couronnement vous est remise
en commémoration de l'adhésion de Sa Majesté
au Trône et en reconnaissance de votre
contributions au service du Canada.

King's Coronation Certificate



Canadian Ships Refueling in Transit to the Gulf



National Defence Défense nationale

Commander J. P. (Jim) Hutton , CD MSc
Senior Technical Officer

Canadian Naval Task Group (Middle East)

c/o CANFORME HQ
Manama , Bahrain
Telephone 728566

Fax :
Pager :

Canada



القائد الكندي

قيادة مجموعة دعم و الأعمار (جنوب غرب اسيا) قوة المهام البحري

المجموعة التكليفية بهية الاسطول الكندي
(الشرق الاوسط)

جيمس ب . هتون قائد
هاتف ستلايت ٠٧٨٦٢٤٢٦١
هاتف بحري ٤٦٦١٦٥٦١
فاكسميل ٤٦٦ ٣٣٤٩

توقيع
جيمس هتون
James Hutton

كندا

My Persian Gulf Business Cards in Two Languages



Second Canadian Destroyer Squadron Gift Upon My Posting



HMCS Vancouver Under Construction



Combat Systems Trials on HMCS Regina



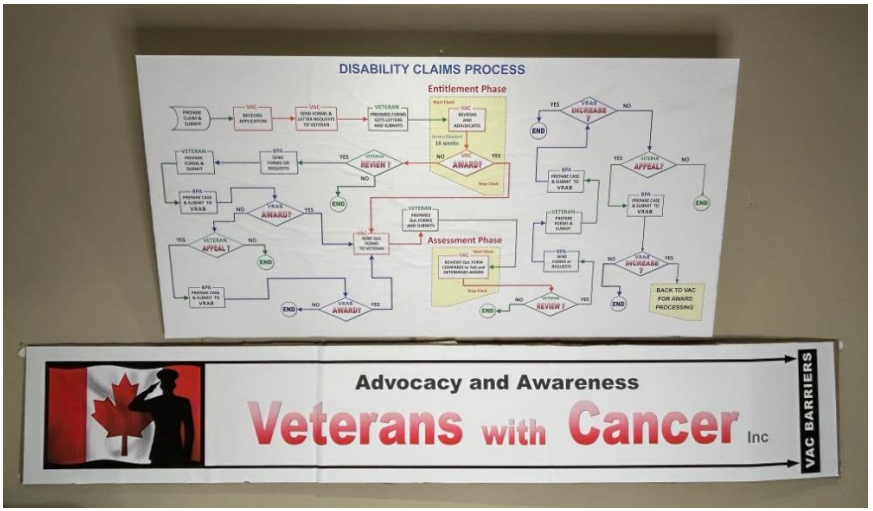
Gift from the CPF Detachment Upon My Retirement



Canadian Patrol Frigate Project Combat Systems



My First Days in Retirement



On the Wall of My Veterans with Cancer Office



A Retirement Construction Project

Informational Websites

www.jphutton.com a history of my working and personal lives

www.jimhutton.ca a record of my family adventures

www.veteranswithcancer.com my support and advocacy for

www.VAC.claims Helping Veterans file their Claims

www.oldfidelity.com my radio restoration retirement hobby

My Involvement in My Community

www.jphutton.com/taxes my first municipal finance study

www.jphutton.com/taxes2 my second municipal finance study

www.jphutton.com/remake/index1.asp an overview of my municipal advocacy

www.jphutton.com/votelocal/index1.asp involved in elections

www.jphutton.com/cost/index.asp more election involvement

www.RoadblocksAndRelationships.com download the eBook Here

Veterans with Cancer Inc.
Advocacy & Awareness



1935 General Electric Model K-64

And Another Journey
Begins . . . .

